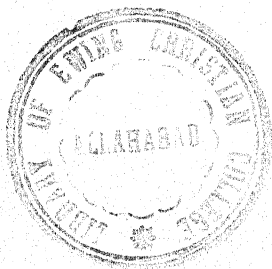




# THE SHORT STORY PARADE

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## TO THE TEACHER

THESE stories have been chosen primarily because their subjects are of natural interest to boys and girls. The plots are based on sports and sportsmanship, dogs and horses, adventure in strange lands or at home, problems of adjustment to life that young people must face and try to solve. Yet no story has been chosen without some merit as a story — cleverness in construction of plot, insight into character, vividness in drawing the scene of the story, or delicacy in understanding the problems of young people.

What is most important is enjoyment of the story. But since these stories were not written primarily for boys and girls, they may need help in understanding and appreciation. Yet discussion of technique that hinders instead of aiding enjoyment defeats the purpose of the reading, for these stories were all written to interest and entertain what Dr. Johnson calls "the common reader," not to serve as a series of exercises in the technique of the short story.

Stories slightly more difficult than average boys and girls would read by themselves are desirable as a basis of classroom discussion. It is possible through discussion to show pupils the elements of story construction, plot, characters, setting, and theme, and to start them on the way to literary appreciation. But the teacher should remember that young people are not interested in literary criticism, nor have they the background of reading or experience to judge of merit in any great detail, though they can be taught certain elementary standards of literary taste. Hence questions for discussion must deal with understanding the plot of the story, getting a clear idea of why the characters act as they do, and picturing the

setting clearly. Questions dealing except in elementary fashion with literary criticism are beyond young readers.

Of course, classes differ. Some enjoy working out on the blackboard with the teacher's help a brief tabulation of the plot of some of the stories and pointing out the antecedent events, the initial incident, the steps in the rising action, the climax, and the conclusion. Other classes may be only bored by such analysis. Some boys and girls enjoy discussing the characters and comparing them with people they know. Others like to picture the scenes of the stories and draw pictures of them or make miniature stage settings. Still other classes like to discuss the problems involved in the stories and to pass judgment upon the success or failure of the characters in solving their problems. Sometimes pleasure is found in dramatizing the stories: acting them out in class as short plays or reading them from behind a screen as radio plays. Other classes like the reading period conducted as a club with only informal discussion under a student leader. The same method does not apply to every story or to every class. Here teachers must use their own judgment in choosing ways to interest the boys and girls in each individual group.

The stories are of different types, and pupils can be led to realize how many fields of interest can be discovered through reading short stories; but rigid classification of stories as stories of adventure, of love, of sport, or as romantic or realistic, or as stories of plot, character, setting, or theme, is a waste of time, since the same story may often easily be placed in several categories.

Questions for discussion are suggested, though it is realized that teachers may prefer their own, adapted to a particular group of boys and girls. Certainly no one will use all the suggestions offered.

Young people like to try to write stories of their own; hence suggestions for compositions are given; but here again teach-

ers will keep their own classes in mind and use only those suggestions that are helpful for those groups.

At the end of each story suggestions are given for further reading. As the stories suggested all have something in common with the story that has just been read, interesting comparisons may be made; an individual pupil may read a story and make a report to the class, or the teacher may read a story to the class and let general class discussion follow the reading. These suggestions for reading can be supplemented from the reading lists compiled in the handbooks now generally published by junior and senior high schools or from the excellent list compiled by the National Council of Teachers of English. Every teacher is probably familiar with the invaluable *Index to Short Stories* by Ina Ten Eyck Firkins, the reference librarian of the University of Minnesota, published by the H. W. Wilson Company of New York, which tells in what collection of stories or in what magazine any individual short story may be found.





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## JUST A MINUTE, BOYS AND GIRLS, BEFORE YOU READ THESE STORIES!

HERE are twenty short stories for you to read and enjoy. Since tastes differ, you may not like them all, any more than you like all the movies or all the radio programs that your friends enjoy. Yet haven't you often found it interesting to discover why your friends enjoy a story or a movie that you did not like, or to explain to them why you liked one that failed to interest them? Sometimes in learning your friends' opinions you gain new sources of enjoyment for yourself, for other people may show you something about a book or a picture that you missed. Or you may enjoy finding out something about yourself. Why do you like certain stories or movies and dislike others? Do not be upset because you do not like all these stories, but try to find out why other boys and girls in the class like stories that you may not care for, and why you like certain stories that do not appeal to them. Think how stupid life would be if we were all alike and all liked the same things!

While reading and discussing these stories in class, you may learn certain facts about them. You will find that almost anything may be the subject of a story and that the same subject may be the beginning of very different stories. Perhaps these stories will lead you to find more enjoyment in your own life, in the things that you and your friends do every day and in the things that hap-

## 2 JUST A MINUTE, BOYS AND GIRLS

pen to you and to them. You may want to try your own hand at writing similar stories about what has happened to you, for you are sure to be reminded by some of the stories of experiences of your own. It is hoped that these stories will make you want to read other stories in your school or public library or at home, so that you will always have a means of enjoyment whenever you have an interesting book at hand.

You will find certain things in all stories, certain *elements*, as they are called. These elements are the plot, the characters, the setting, and the theme.

All stories tell of something that happens, and generally these events lead to a definite exciting point where you see how the problem of the story will be solved. This connected series of events is called the *plot* of the story, and the exciting point near the end of the story to which the rest of the story leads is called the *climax*. Short stories end quickly after the climax.

Naturally, all stories have *characters*, though these characters may be people or animals. Generally the characters are in some difficulty, and the plot tells of their successful or unsuccessful attempts to solve their problem. The chief character is called the *hero*. Sometimes there is a kind of double hero. In a love story the man and the girl he loves struggle together as a kind of double hero against other people or against misfortune; or in a story about a boy and a dog, the boy and his dog may be a kind of double hero as they try to overcome some difficulty or danger together.



All stories take place somewhere, and this background of the story that the author pictures for you in words and that takes the place of the scenery in the movies or in the theater or in your school plays is called the *setting*.

Each story has a central idea about which the story is built. This central idea is called the *theme* of the story. Some stories teach a definite lesson or moral.

You may like to trace the way the plot of a story is developed, or to discuss the characters or the setting or the theme of a story.

You may also begin to learn to appreciate what makes a good story in contrast to a poor one. You already have certain ideas as to what makes a good movie or radio program or story. See if in your class discussions you can get more light on this subject.

Questions such as the following may help you to appreciate a good story.

*Is the story convincing?* Does it seem real, seem true to life? Are the events probable; or if impossible, as in legends or fairy tales, are they told in such a way that the story seems real as you read it, even though you know such things could not truly happen except in the world of make-believe? Does the end of the story follow naturally from the beginning, even though there may be a surprise at the end?

*Do the people in the story seem real?* Does the author make clear to you what kind of people they are, so that you can picture them to yourself? Do they act as you might expect them to act if you knew them in real life?

#### 4 JUST A MINUTE, BOYS AND GIRLS

If you cannot picture them, perhaps the author did not tell you enough to give you a clear picture, or he may have made his characters act unnaturally, made a boy do something that the kind of boy he has described would not or could not do. Then the author has failed to tell his story skillfully.

*Is the scene of the story clear*, so that you can picture the background for the people in the story? The scene may be a street or a house such as you live in yourself, or it may be a jungle or a city that you have never seen. In any case, if the story is well told, the picture will be clearly drawn, though with words instead of with a pencil or a paintbrush.

But notice that in reading for real enjoyment you must become a kind of author yourself. As you read, you must use your own imagination to picture the people, the scene, and the action of the story. You must read with a wide-awake mind to get the full enjoyment of the story.

You cannot enjoy a story unless your imagination is wide-awake any more than you can enjoy a movie if you fall half-asleep in your seat in the theater. Thus when you begin each story, raise the curtain in your imagination; and as you read, watch what the people in this theater of your mind say and do as they struggle with their difficulties and come to a happy or unhappy ending. May you get real enjoyment from your reading of *Short Story Parade!*

## THE OPEN WINDOW

by "Saki" (H. H. Munro)

HAVE you ever had to entertain your big sister's beau, or a friend of your mother's, until the older people were ready to greet their guests? In "The Open Window," "a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen" finds herself in this situation, and entertains her aunt's caller — with unusual results!

“SAKI” is the pen name of H. H. Munro, an Englishman who became famous for his unusual short stories. His stories are usually brief and clever, like “The Open Window.”

Mr. Munro was born in 1870 in India, where his father was stationed. As is customary in English families living in far-away parts of the British Empire, he and his brother and sister were sent to England for their education. There they lived with their grandmother and two rather forbidding aunts, who did little to make their childhood happy. However, the three children enjoyed one another; and when at last their father returned to England, they enjoyed a real family life and made delightful trips with their father to Switzerland, Normandy, Germany, and other parts of Europe.

Later Mr. Munro returned to India as a member of the Military Police. He was extremely fond of animals. One of his pets was a tiger kitten that he kept in his room at a hotel. An old lady occupying an adjoining room grew nervous because there was a connecting door in the wall between her and the tiger, and complained to the manager. Mr. Munro, on being questioned, explained that the door was locked on his side and a big box placed against it — so the old lady couldn't possibly break in! As you can guess from this incident, he was fond of practical jokes.

When the World War broke out, he enlisted at once as a private, refusing chances to become an officer. He made many friends in the army, and when he was finally made a noncommissioned officer, he became even more popular, because he was extremely thoughtful for the comfort of his men.

He was killed in action in 1916.

## THE OPEN WINDOW

"MY aunt will be down presently, Mr. Nuttel," said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; "in the meantime you must try to put up with me."

Framton Nuttel endeavored to say the correct something which should duly flatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing.

"I know how it will be," his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural retreat; "you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping. I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice."

Framton wondered whether Mrs. Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction, came into the nice division.

"Do you know many of the people round here?" asked the niece, when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communion.

"Hardly a soul," said Framton. "My sister was staying here, at the rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here."

He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

"Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?" pursued the self-possessed young lady.

"Only her name and address," admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation.

"Her great tragedy happened just three years ago," said the child; "that would be since your sister's time."

"Her tragedy?" asked Framton; somehow in this restful country spot tragedies seemed out of place.

"You may wonder why we keep that window wide-open on an October afternoon," said the niece, indicating a large French window that opened onto a lawn.

"It is quite warm for the time of the year," said Framton; "but has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?"

"Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day's shooting. They never came back. In crossing the moor to their favorite snipe-shooting ground they were all three engulfed in a treacherous piece of bog. It had been that dreadful wet summer, you know, and places that were safe in other years gave way suddenly without warning. Their bodies were never recovered. That was the dreadful part of it." Here the child's voice lost its self-possessed note and became falteringly human. "Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back some day, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with

them, and walk in at that window just as they used to do. That is why the window is kept open every evening till it is quite dusk. Poor dear aunt, she has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm, and Ronnie, her youngest brother, singing 'Bertie, why do you bound?' as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves. Do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window — "

She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for being late in making her appearance.

"I hope Vera has been amusing you?" she said.

"She has been very interesting," said Framton.

"I hope you don't mind the open window," said Mrs. Sappleton briskly; "My husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They've been out for snipe in the marshes to-day, so they'll make a fine mess over my poor carpets. So like you menfolk, isn't it?"

She rattled on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity of birds, and the prospects for duck in the winter. To Framton it was all purely horrible. He made a desperate but only partially successful effort to turn the talk onto a less ghastly topic; he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying past him to the open win-

dow and the lawn beyond. It was certainly an unfortunate coincidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

"The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement, and avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise," announced Framton, who labored under the tolerably widespread delusion that total strangers and chance acquaintances are hungry for the least detail of one's ailments and infirmities, their cause and cure. "On the matter of diet they are not so much in agreement," he continued.

"No?" said Mrs. Sappleton, in a voice which only replaced a yawn at the last moment. Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention — but not to what Framton was saying.

"Here they are at last!" she cried. "Just in time for tea, and don't they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes!"

Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with dazed horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear Framton swung around in his seat and looked in the same direction.

In the deepening twilight three figures were walking across the lawn toward the window; they all carried guns under their arms, and one of them was additionally burdened with a white coat hung over his shoulders. A tired brown spaniel kept close at their heels. Noiselessly they



neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted out of the dusk: "I said, Bertie, why do you bound?"

Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall door, the gravel drive, and the front gate were dimly noted stages in his headlong retreat. A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid imminent collision.

"Here we are, my dear," said the bearer of the white mackintosh, coming in through the window; "fairly muddy, but most of it's dry. Who was that who bolted out as we came up?"

"A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel," said Mrs. Sappleton; "could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of good-by or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost."

"I expect it was the spaniel," said the niece calmly; "he told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of pariah dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make anyone lose their nerve."

Romance at short notice was her specialty.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. What is added to the story by the fact that Mr. Nuttel has come to the country to rest his nerves?
2. Why does Vera want to find out whether the guest knows her aunt?

3. How does the aunt's conversation help her niece's scheme?
4. What does the aunt think of her guest's conversation?
5. What is the climax of the story? What is its effect upon the guest?
6. How does the niece explain the guest's behavior after he has rushed out?
7. What are pariah dogs?
8. What do you think of Vera's behavior?
9. What do you think parents should do with girls like Vera who have "romance at short notice as their specialty"?
10. As you read the story, how long were you fooled by Vera?
11. What makes the story amusing?

#### *If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. Write a letter Mr. Nuttel might write to his sister describing his call on Mrs. Sappleton.
2. Make up and act out the conversation that might take place when Mrs. Sappleton discovers what Vera has done.
3. Tell or write about a trick you once played. Your title might be:  
    The Worst Whopper I Ever Told  
    The Time I Created "Romance at Short Notice"  
    A Joke I Played on a Friend

#### *If You Want to Read*

- "A Sisterly Scheme," H. C. Bunner  
"Affairs of the Morgans," Evelyn Gill Klahr  
"Possessing Prudence," Amy Wentworth Stone  
"The Story-teller," "The Lull" (also about Vera), "The Schwartz-Metterklume Method," "Dusk," "The She-wolf," "The Boar-pig," "The Lumber Room," "Laura," and "The Mouse," Saki (H. H. Munro)

## THE HEART OF LITTLE SHIKARA

by Edison Marshall

INDIA, tropical jungles, tiger hunts! What pictures do these words call up in your mind? Do you remember pictures of the tropics in the *National Geographic*, stories of exploration and hunting by Martin Johnson, or movies like *Elephant Boy* and *Gunga Din*?

In India tiger hunting is the most dangerous sport the jungles provide for visiting white men. It is natural there for a boy to admire a daring hunter, just as you admire a skillful football or baseball player. In "The Heart of Little Shikara" you will find an exciting picture of a tiger hunt and learn how a boy was lured into adventure through his admiration of a great hunter.

EDISON MARSHALL naturally has an adventurous spirit, for he comes of Colonial ancestors some of whom fought in the early wars of this country and in the War between the States, and others followed the frontier westward. His grandfather joined the gold rush of '49 to California, and his father went West in 1870. He himself was born in Indiana and educated in the University of Oregon. During the World War he served as a lieutenant. He has been on exploring and hunting expeditions in Alaska, Siberia, Central Africa, and Indo-China. He has lived in Florida and in Georgia. He spends his time in writing, especially in writing short stories of animals, in exploring expeditions, mainly in the Far North, and in hunting, although he says that he doesn't kill much, because it is the trip and not the killing that he enjoys.

He considers "The Heart of Little Shikara," which won the O. Henry Memorial first prize the year it was published, and "The Elephant Remembers," another tale of the jungle, his best short stories.

## THE HEART OF LITTLE SHIKARA

IF it hadn't been for a purple moon that came peering up above the dark jungle just at nightfall, it would have been impossible to tell that Little Shikara was at his watch. He was really just the color of the shadows — a rather pleasant brown — he was very little indeed, and besides, he was standing very, very still. If he was trembling at all, from anticipation and excitement, it was no more than Nahar the tiger trembles as he crouches in ambush. But the moon did show him — peering down through the leaf clusters of the heavy vines — and shone very softly in his wide-open eyes.

And it was a purple moon — no other color that man could name. It looked almost unreal, like a paper moon painted very badly by a clumsy stagehand. The jungle moon quite often has that peculiar purplish tint, most travelers know, but few of them indeed ever try to tell what causes it. This particular moon probed down here and there between the tall bamboos, transformed the jungle — just now waking — into a mystery and a fairy-land, glinted on a hard-packed elephant trail that wound away into the thickets, and always came back to shine on the coal-black Oriental eyes of the little boy beside the village gate. It showed him standing very straight and just as tall as his small stature would permit, and looked oddly silvery and strange on his long, dark hair. Little Shikara, son of Khoda Dunnoo, was waiting for the return

of a certain idol and demigod who was even now riding home in his howdah from the tiger hunt.

Other of the villagers would be down to meet Warwick Sahib as soon as they heard the shouts of his beaters — but Little Shikara had been waiting almost an hour. Likely, if they had known about it, they would have commented on his badness, because he was notoriously bad, if indeed — as the villagers told each other — he was not actually cursed with evil spirits.

In the first place, he was almost valueless as a herder of buffalo. Three times, when he had been sent with the other boys to watch the herds in their wallows, he had left his post and crept away into the fringe of jungle on what was unquestionably some mission of witchcraft. For small naked brown boys, as a rule, do not go alone and unarmed into the thick bamboos. Too many things can happen to prevent their ever coming out again: too many brown silent ribbons crawl in the grass, or too many yellow, striped creatures, no less lithe, lurk in the thickets. But the strangest thing of all — and the surest sign of witchcraft — was that he had always come safely out again, yet with never any satisfactory explanations as to why he had gone. He had always looked some way very joyful and tremulous — and perhaps even pale if from the nature of things a brown boy ever can look pale. But it was the kind of paleness that one has after a particularly exquisite experience. It was not the dumb, teeth-chattering paleness of fear.

“I saw the sergeant of the jungle,” Little Shikara said

after one of these excursions. And this made no sense at all.

"There are none of the King's soldiers here," the brown village folks replied to him. "Either thou liest to us, or thine eyes lied to thee. And didst thou also see the chevron that told his rank?"

"That was the way I knew him. It was the black bear, and he wore the pale chevron low on his throat."

This was Little Shikara all over. Of course he referred to the black Himalayan bear, which all men know wears a yellowish patch, of chevron shape, just in front of his fore-legs; but why he should call him a jungle sergeant was quite beyond the wit of the village folk to say. Their imagination did not run in that direction. It never even occurred to them that Little Shikara might be a born jungle creature, expatriated by the accident of birth — one of that free, strange breed that can never find peace in the villages of men.

"But remember the name we gave him," his mother would say. "Perhaps he is only living up to his name."

For there are certain native hunters in India that are known, far and wide, as the Shikaris; and possibly she meant in her tolerance that her little son was merely a born huntsman. But in reality Little Shikara was not named for these men at all. Rather it was for a certain fleet-winged little hawk, a hunter of sparrows, that is one of the most free spirits in all the jungle.

And it was almost like taking part in some great hunt himself — to be waiting at the gate for the return of War-

wick Sahib. Even now, the elephant came striding out of the shadows; and Little Shikara could see the trophy. The hunt had indeed been successful, and the boy's glowing eyes beheld — even in the shadows — the largest, most beautiful tiger skin he had ever seen. It was the great Nahar, the royal tiger, who had killed one hundred cattle from near-by fields.

Warwick Sahib rode in his howdah, and he did not seem to see the village people that came out to meet him. In truth, he seemed half-asleep, his muscles limp, his gray eyes full of thoughts. He made no answer to the triumphant shouts of the village folk. Little Shikara glanced once at the lean, bronzed face, the limp, white, thin hands, and something like a shiver of ecstasy went clear to his ten toes. For like many other small boys, all over the broad world, he was a hero-worshiper to the last hair of his head; and this quiet man on the elephant was to him beyond all measure the most wonderful living creature on the earth.

He didn't cry out, as the others did. He simply stood in mute worship, his little body tingling with glory. Warwick Sahib had looked up now, and his slow eyes were sweeping the line of brown faces. But still he did not seem to see them. And then — wonder of wonders — his eyes rested full on the eyes of his little worshiper beside the gate.

But it was quite the way of Warwick Sahib to sweep his gray, tired-out eyes over a scene and seemingly perceive nothing, yet in reality absorbing every detail with the



accuracy of a photographic plate. And his seeming indifference was not a pose with him, either. He was just a great sportsman who was also an English gentleman, and he had learned certain lessons of impassiveness from the wild. Only one of the brown faces he beheld was worth a lingering glance. And when he met that one his eyes halted in their sweeping survey — and Warwick Sahib smiled.

That face was the brown, eager visage of Little Shikara. And the blood of the boy flowed to the skin, and he glowed red all over through the brown.

It was only the faintest of quiet, tolerant smiles; but it meant more to him than almost any kind of honor could have meant to the prematurely gray man in the howdah. The latter passed on to his estate, and some of the villagers went back to their women and their thatch huts. But still Little Shikara stood motionless — and it wasn't until the thought suddenly came to him that possibly the beaters had already gathered and were telling the story of the kill that with startling suddenness he raced back through the gates to the village.

Yes, the beaters had assembled in a circle under a tree, and most of the villagers had gathered to hear the story. He slipped in among them, and listened with both outstanding little ears. Warwick Sahib had dismounted from his elephant as usual, the beaters said, and with but one attendant had advanced up the bed of a dry creek. This was quite like Warwick Sahib, and Little Shikara felt himself tingling again. Other hunters, particularly

many of the rich sahibs from across the sea, shot their tigers from the security of the howdah; but this wasn't Warwick's way of doing. The male tiger had risen snarling from his lair and had been felled at the first shot.

Most of the villagers had supposed that the story would end at this point. Warwick Sahib's tiger hunts were usually just such simple and expeditious affairs. The gun would lift to his shoulder, the quiet eyes would glance along the barrel, and the tiger—whether charging or standing still—would speedily die. But today there had been a curious epilogue. Just as the beaters had started toward the fallen animal and the white Heaven-born's cigarette case was open in his hand, Nahara, Nahar's great, tawny mate, had suddenly sprung forth from the bamboo thickets.

She dove straight to the nearest of the beaters. There was no time whatever for Warwick to take aim. His rifle leaped, like a live thing, in his arms, but not one of the horrified beaters had seen his eyes lower to the sights. Yet the bullet went home—they could tell by the way the tiger flashed to her breast in the grass.

Yet she was only wounded. One of the beaters, starting, had permitted a bough of a tree to whip Warwick in the face, and the blow had disturbed what little aim he had. It was almost a miracle that he had hit the great cat at all. At once the thickets had closed around her, and the beaters had been unable to drive her forth again.

The circle was silent thereafter. They seemed to be waiting for Khusru, one of the headmen of the village, to

give his opinion. He knew more about the wild animals than any mature native in the assembly, and his comments on the hunting stories were usually worth hearing.

"We will not be in the honored service of the Protector of the Poor at this time a year from now," he said.

They all waited tensely. Shikara shivered. "Speak, Khusru," they urged him.

"Warwick Sahib will go again to the jungles — and Nahara will be waiting. She owes two debts. One is the killing of her mate — and ye know that these two tigers have been long and faithful mates. Do ye think she will let that debt go unpaid? She will also avenge her own wound."

"Perhaps she will die of bleeding," one of the others suggested.

"Nay, or ye would have found her this afternoon. Ye know that it is the wounded tiger that is most to be feared. One day, and he will go forth in pursuit of her again; and then ye will not see him riding back so grandly on his elephant. Perhaps she will come here, to carry away our children."

Again Shikara tingled — hoping that Nahara would at least come close enough to cause excitement. And that night, too happy to keep silent, he told his mother of Warwick Sahib's smile. "And some time I — I, thine own son," he said as sleepiness came upon him, "will be a killer of tigers, even as Warwick Sahib."

"Little sparrow hawk," his mother laughed at him. "Little one of mighty words, only the great sahibs that

come from afar, and Warwick Sahib himself, may hunt the tiger. So how canst thou, little worthless?"

"I will soon be grown," he persisted, "and I — I, too — will some time return with such a tiger skin as the great Heaven-born brought this afternoon." Little Shikara was very sleepy, and he was telling his dreams much more frankly than was his wont. "And the village folk will come out to meet me with shoutings, and I will tell them of the shot — in the circle under the tree."

"And where, little hawk, wilt thou procure thine elephants, and such rupees as are needed?"

"Warwick Sahib shoots from the ground — and so will I. And sometimes he goes forth with only one attendant — and I will not need even one. And who can say — perhaps he will find me even a bolder man than Gunga Singhai; and he will take me in his place on the hunts in the jungles."

For Gunga Singhai was Warwick Sahib's own personal attendant and gun-carrier — the native that the Protector of the Poor could trust in the tightest places. So it was only to be expected that Little Shikara's mother should laugh at him. The idea of her son being an attendant of Warwick Sahib, not to mention a hunter of tigers, was only a tale to tell her husband when the boy's bright eyes were closed in sleep.

"Nay, little man," she told him. "Would I want thee torn to pieces in Nahara's claws? Would I want thee smelling of the jungle again, as thou didst after chasing the waterbuck through the bamboos? Nay — thou wilt

be a herdsman, like thy father — and perhaps gather many rupees.”

But Little Shikara did not want to think of rupees. Even now, as sleep came to him, his childish spirit had left the circle of thatch roofs, and had gone on tremulous expeditions into the jungle. Far away, the trumpet call of a wild tusker trembled through the moist, hot night; and great bell-shaped flowers made the air pungent and heavy with perfume. A tigress skulked somewhere in a thicket licking an injured leg with her rough tongue, pausing to listen to every sound the night gave forth. Little Shikara whispered in his sleep.

A half-mile distant, in his richly furnished bungalow, Warwick Sahib dozed over his after-dinner cigar. He was in evening clothes, and crystal and silver glittered on his board. But his gray eyes were half closed, and the gleam from his plate could not pass the long, dark lashes. For his spirit was far distant, too — on the jungle trails with that of Little Shikara.

## II

One sunlit morning, perhaps a month after the skin of Nahar was brought in from the jungle, Warwick Sahib's mail was late. It was an unheard-of thing. Always before, just as the clock struck eight, he would hear the cheerful tinkle of the postman's bells. At first he considered complaining; but, as morning drew to early afternoon, he began to believe that investigation would be the wiser course.

The postman's route carried him along an old elephant trail through a patch of thick jungle beside one of the tributaries of the Manipur. When natives went out to look, he was neither on the path nor drowned in the creek, nor yet in his thatched hut at the other end of his route. The truth was that this particular postman's bells would never be heard by human ears again. And there was enough evidence in the wet mold of the trail to know what had occurred.

That night the circle under the tree was silent and shivering. "Who is next?" they asked of one another. The jungle night came down, breathless and mysterious, and now and then a twig was cracked by a heavy foot at the edge of the thickets. In Warwick's house the great Protector of the Poor took his rifles from their cases and fitted them together.

"Tomorrow," he told Gunga Singhai, "we will settle for that postman's death." Singhai breathed deeply, but said nothing. Perhaps his dark eyes brightened. The tiger hunts were nearly as great a delight to him as they were to Warwick himself.

But while Nahara, lame from Warwick's bullet, could no longer overtake cattle, she did with great skillfulness avoid the onrush of the beaters. Again Little Shikara waited at the village gate for his hero to return; but the beaters walked silently tonight. Nor were there any tales to be told under the tree.

Nahara, a fairly respectable cattle-killer before, had become in a single night one of the worst terrors of India.

Of course she was still a coward, but she had learned, by virtue of a chance meeting with a postman on a trail after a week of heart-devouring starvation, two or three extremely portentous lessons. One of them was that not even the little deer, drinking beside the Manipur, died half so easily as these tall, forked forms of which she had previously been so afraid. She found out also that they could neither run swiftly nor walk silently, and they could be approached easily even by a tiger that cracked a twig with every step. It simplified the problem of living immensely; and just as any other feline would have done, she took the line of least resistance. If there had been plenty of carrion in the jungle, Nahara might never have hunted men. But the kites and the jackals looked after the carrion; and they were much swifter and keener-eyed than a lame tiger.

She knew enough not to confine herself to one village; and it is rather hard to explain how any lower creature, that obviously cannot reason, could have possessed this knowledge. Perhaps it was because she had learned that a determined hunt, with many beaters and men on elephants, invariably followed her killings. It was always well to travel just as far as possible from the scene. She found out also that, just as a doe is easier felled than a horned buck, certain of this new kind of game were more easily taken than the others. Sometimes children played at the door of their huts, and sometimes old men were afflicted with such maladies that they could not flee at all. All these things Nahara learned; and in learning them she

caused a certain civil office of the British Empire to put an exceedingly large price on her head.

Gradually the fact dawned on her that unlike the deer and the buffalo, this new game was more easily hunted in the daylight — particularly in that tired-out, careless twilight hour when the herders and the plantation hands came in from their work. At night the village folk kept in their huts, and such woodcutters and gypsies as slept without wakened every hour to tend their fires. Nahara was deathly afraid of fire. Night after night she would creep round and round a gypsy camp, her eyes like two pale-blue moons in the darkness, and would never dare attack.

And because she was taking her living in a manner forbidden by the laws of the jungle, the glory and beauty of of her youth quickly departed from her. There are no prisons for those that break the jungle laws, no courts and no appointed officers; but because these are laws that go down to the roots of life, punishment is always swift and inevitable. "Thou shalt not kill men," is the first law of the wild creatures; and everyone knows that any animal or breed of animals that breaks this law has sooner or later been hunted down and slain — just like any other murderer. The mange came upon her, and she lost flesh, and certain of her teeth began to come out. She was no longer the beautiful female of her species, to be sung to by the weaver birds as she passed beneath. She was a hag and a vampire, hatred of whom lay deep in every human heart in her hunting range.



Often the hunting was poor, and sometimes she went many days in a stretch without making a single kill. And in all beasts, high and low, this is the last step to the worst degeneracy of all. It instills a curious, terrible kind of blood lust — to kill, not once, but as many times as possible in the same hunt; to be content not with one death, but to slay and slay until the whole herd is destroyed. It is the instinct that makes a little weasel kill all the chickens in a coop, when one is all it can possibly carry away, and that will cause a wolf to leap from sheep to sheep in a fold until every one is dead. Nahara didn't get a chance to kill every day; so when the opportunity did come, like a certain pitiable kind of human hunter who comes from afar to hunt small game, she killed as many times as she could in quick succession. And the British Empire raised the price on her head.

One afternoon found her within a half-mile of Warwick's bungalow, and for five days she had gone without food. One would not have thought of her as a royal tigress, the queen of the felines and one of the most beautiful of all living things. And since she was still tawny and graceful, it would be hard to understand why she no longer gave the impression of beauty. It was simply gone, as a flame goes, and her queenliness was wholly departed, too. In some vague way she had become a poisonous, a ghastly thing, to be named with such outcasts as the jackals or hyenas.

Excessive hunger, in most of the flesh-eating animals, is really a first cousin to madness. It brings bad dreams

and visions, and, worst of all, it induces an insubordination to all the forest laws of man and beast. A well-fed wolf pack will run in stark panic from a human being, but even the wisest of mountaineers do not care to meet the same gray band in the starving times of winter. Starvation brings recklessness, a desperate frenzied courage that is likely to upset all of one's preconceived notions as to the behavior of animals. It also brings, so that all men may be aware of its presence, a peculiar lurid glow to the balls of the eyes.

In fact, the two pale circles of fire were the most noticeable characteristics of the long, tawny cat that crept through the bamboos. Except for them, she would hardly have been discernible at all. The yellow grass made a perfect background; her black stripes looked like the streaks of shadow between the stalks of bamboo; and for one that is lame she crept with an astounding silence. One couldn't have believed that such a great creature could lie so close to the earth and be so utterly invisible in the low thickets.

A little peninsula of dwarf bamboos and tall jungle grass extended out into the pasture before the village, and Nahara crept out clear to its point. She didn't seem to be moving. One couldn't catch the stir and draw of muscles. And yet she slowly glided to the end; then began to wait. Her head sunk low, her body grew tense, her tail whipped softly back and forth, with as easy a motion as the swaying of a serpent. The light flamed and died and flamed and died again in her pale eyes.

Soon a villager who had been working in Warwick's fields came trotting in Oriental fashion across the meadow. His eyes were only human, and he did not see the tawny shape in the tall grass. If any one had told him that a full-grown tigress could have crept to such a place and still remained invisible, he would have laughed. He was going to his thatched hut, to brown wife and babies, and it was no wonder that he trotted swiftly. The muscles of the great cat bunched, and now the whipping tail began to have a little vertical motion that is the final warning of a spring.

The man was already in leaping range; but the tiger had learned, in many experiences, always to make sure. Still she crouched — a single instant in which the trotting native came two paces nearer. Then the man drew up with a gasp of fright.

For just as the clear outlines of an object that has long been concealed in a maze of light and shadow will often leap, with sudden vividness, to the eyes, the native suddenly perceived the tiger.

He caught the whole dread picture — the crouching form, the terrible blue lights of the eyes, the whipping tail. The gasp he uttered from his closing throat seemed to act like the fall of a firing pin against a shell on the bunched muscles of the animal; and she left her covert in a streak of tawny light.

But Nahara's leaps had never been quite accurate since she had been wounded by Warwick's bullet, months before. They were usually straight enough for the general

purposes of hunting, but they missed by a long way the "theoretical center of impact" of which artillery officers speak. Her lame paw always seemed to disturb her balance. By remembering it, she could usually partly overcome the disadvantage; but today, in the madness of her hunger, she had been unable to remember anything except the terrible rapture of killing. This circumstance alone, however, would not have saved the native's life. Even though her fangs missed his throat, the power of the blow and her rending talons would have certainly snatched away his life as a storm snatches a leaf. But there was one other determining factor. The Burman had seen the tiger just before she leaped; and although there had been no time for conscious thought, his guardian reflexes had flung him to one side in a single frenzied effort to miss the full force of the spring.

The result of both these things was that he received only an awkward, sprawling blow from the animal's shoulder. Of course he was hurled to the ground, for no human body in the world is built to withstand the ton or so of shocking power of a three-hundred-pound cat leaping through the air. The tigress sprawled down also, and because she lighted on her wounded paw, she squealed with pain. It was possibly three seconds before she had forgotten the stabbing pain in her paw and had gathered herself to spring on the unconscious form of the native. And that three seconds gave Warwick Sahib, sitting at the window of his study, an opportunity to seize his rifle and fire.

Warwick knew tigers, and he had kept the rifle always ready for just such a need as this. The distance was nearly five hundred yards, and the bullet went wide of its mark. Nevertheless, it saved the native's life. The great cat remembered this same far-off explosion from another day, in a dry creek bed of months before, and the sing of the bullet was a remembered thing, too. Although it would speedily return to her, her courage fled and she turned and faced into the bamboos.

In an instant, Warwick was on his great veranda, calling his beaters. Gunga Singhai, his faithful gun carrier, slipped shells into the magazine of his master's high-calibered close-range tiger rifle. "The elephant, Sahib?" he asked swiftly.

"Nay, this will be on foot. Make the beaters circle about the fringe of bamboos. Thou and I will cross the eastern fields and shoot at her as she breaks through."

But there was really no time to plan a complete campaign. Even now, the first gray of twilight was blurring the sharp outlines of the jungle, and the soft jungle night was hovering, ready to descend. Warwick's plan was to cut through to a certain little creek that flowed into the river and with Singhai to continue on to the edge of the bamboos that overlooked a wide field. The beaters would prevent the tigress from turning back beyond the village, as it was at least possible that he would get a shot at her as she burst from the jungle and crossed the field to the heavier thickets beyond.

"Warwick Sahib walks into the teeth of his enemy,"

Khusru, the hunter, told a little group that watched from the village gate. "Nahara will collect her debts."

A little brown boy shivered at his words and wondered if the beaters would turn and kick him, as they had always done before, if he should attempt to follow them. It was the tiger hunt, in view of his own village, and he sat down, tremulous with rapture, in the grass to watch. It was almost as if his dream — that he himself should be a hunter of tigers — was coming true. He wondered why the beaters seemed to move so slowly and with so little heart.

He would have known if he could have looked into their eyes. Each black pupil was framed with white. Human hearts grow shaken and bloodless from such sights as this they had just seen, and only the heart of a jungle creature — the heart of the eagle that the jungle gods, by some unheard-of fortune, had put in the breast of Little Shikara — could prevail against them. Besides, the superstitious Burmans thought that Warwick was walking straight to death — that the time had come for Nahara to collect her debts.

### III

Warwick Sahib and Singhai disappeared at once into the fringe of jungle, and silence immediately fell upon them. The cries of the beaters at once seemed curiously dim. It was as if no sound could live in the great silences under the arching trees. Soon it was as if they were alone.

They walked side by side, Warwick with his rifle held

ready. He had no false ideas in regard to this tiger hunt. He knew that his prey was desperate with hunger, that she had many old debts to pay, and that she would charge on sight.

The self-rage that is felt on missing some particularly fortunate chance is not confined to human beings alone. There is an old saying in the forest that a feline that has missed his stroke is like a jackal in dog days — and that means that it is not safe to be anywhere in the region with him. He simply goes rabid and is quite likely to leap at the first living thing that stirs. Warwick knew that Nahara had just been cheated out of her kill and someone in the jungle would pay for it.

The gaudy birds that looked down from the tree branches could scarcely recognize this prematurely gray man as a hunter. He walked rather quietly, yet with no conscious effort toward stealth. The rifle rested easily in his arms; his gray eyes were quiet and thoughtful as always. Singularly, his splendid features were quite in repose. The Burman, however, had more of the outer signs of alertness; and yet there was none of the blind terror upon him that marked the beaters.

"Where are the men?" Warwick asked quietly. "It is strange that we do not hear them shouting."

"They are afraid, Sahib," Singhai replied. "The forest pigs have left us to do our own hunting."

Warwick corrected him with a smile. "Forest pigs are brave enough," he answered. "They are sheep — just sheep — sheep of the plains."

The broad trail divided, like a three-tined candlestick, into narrow trails. Warwick halted beside the center of the three that led to the creek they were obliged to cross. Just for an instant he stood watching, gazing into the deep-blue dusk of the deeper jungle. Twilight was falling softly. The trails soon vanished into shadow — patches of deep gloom, relieved here and there by a bright leaf that reflected the last twilight rays. A living creature coughed and rustled away in the thickets beside him.

“There is little use of going on,” he said. “It is growing too dark. But there will be killings before dawn if we don’t get her first.”

The servant stood still, waiting. It was not his place to advise his master.

“If we leave her, she’ll come again before the dawn. Many of the herders haven’t returned — she’ll get one of them sure. At least we may cross the creek and get a view of the great fields. She is certain to cross them if she has heard the beaters.”

In utter silence they went on. One hundred yards farther they came to the creek, and both strode in together to ford.

The water was only knee-deep, but Warwick’s boots sank three inches in the mud of the bottom. And at that instant the gods of the jungle, always waiting with drawn scimitar for the unsuspecting, turned against them.

Singhai suddenly splashed down into the water on his hands and knees. He did not cry out. If he made any



sound at all, it was just a shivering gasp that the splash of water wholly obscured. But the thing that brought home the truth to Warwick was the pain that flashed, vivid as lightning, across his dark face, and the horror of death that left its shadow. Something churned and writhed in the mud, and then Warwick fired.

Both of them had forgotten Mugger, the crocodile, that so loves to wait in the mud of a ford. He had seized Singhai's foot and had already snatched him down into the water when Warwick fired. No living flesh can withstand the terrible, rending shock of a high-powered sporting rifle at close range. Mugger had plates of armor, but even these could not have availed against it if he had been exposed to the fire. As it was, several inches of water stood between, a more effective armor than a two-inch steel plate on a battleship. Of course the shock carried through, a smashing blow that caused the reptile to release his hold on Singhai's leg; but before the native could get to his feet he had struck again. The next instant both men were fighting for their lives.

They fought with their hands, and Warwick fought with his rifle, and the native slashed again and again with the long knife that he carried at his belt. To a casual glance, a crocodile is wholly incapable of quick action. These two found him a slashing, darting, wolflike thing, lunging with astounding speed through the muddied water, knocking them from their feet and striking at them as they fell.

The reptile was only half-grown, but in the water they

had none of the usual advantages that man has over the beasts with which he does battle. Warwick could not find a target for his rifle. But even human bodies, usually so weak, find themselves possessed of an amazing reserve strength and agility in the moment of need. These men realized perfectly that their lives were the stakes for which they fought, and they gave every ounce of strength and energy they had. Their aim was to hold the mugger off until they could reach the shore.

At last, by a lucky stroke, Singhai's knife blinded one of the lurid reptile eyes. He was prone in the water when he administered it, and it went home just as the savage teeth were snapping at his throat. For an instant the great reptile flopped in an impotent half-circle, partly reared out of the water. It gave Warwick a chance to shoot, a single instant in which the rifle seemed to whirl about in his arms, drive to his shoulder, and blaze in the deepening twilight. And the shot went true. It pierced the mugger from beneath, tearing upward through the brain. And then the agitated waters of the ford slowly grew quiet.

The last echo of the report was dying when Singhai stretched his bleeding arms about Warwick's body, caught up the rifle, and dragged them forty feet up on the shore. It was an effort that cost the last of his strength. And as the stars popped out of the sky, one by one, through the gray of dusk, the two men lay silent, side by side, on the grassy bank.

Warwick was the first to regain consciousness. At first

he didn't understand the lashing pain in his wrists, the strange numbness in one of his legs, the darkness with the great white Indian stars shining through. Then he remembered. And he tried to stretch his arm to the prone form beside him.

The attempt was an absolute failure. The cool brain dispatched the message; it flew along the telegraph wires of the nerves, but the muscles refused to react. He remembered that the teeth of the mugger had met in one of the muscles of his upper arm, but before unconsciousness had come upon him he had been able to lift the gun to shoot. Possibly infection from the bite had in some manner temporarily paralyzed the arm. He turned, wracked with pain, on his side and lifted his left arm. In doing so his hand crossed before his eyes — and then he smiled wanly in the darkness.

It was quite like Warwick, sportsman and English gentleman, to smile at a time like this. Even in the gray darkness of the jungle night he could see the hand quite plainly. It no longer looked slim and white. And he remembered that the mugger had caught his fingers in one of its last rushes.

He paused only for one glance at the mutilated member. He knew that his first work was to see how Singhai had fared. In that glance he was boundlessly relieved to see that the hand could unquestionably be saved. The fingers were torn, yet their bones did not seem to be severed. Temporarily at least, however, the hand was utterly useless. The fingers felt strange and detached.

He reached out to the still form beside him, touching the dark skin first with his fingers, and then, because they had ceased to function, with the flesh of his wrist. He expected to find it cold. Singhai was alive, however, and his warm blood beat close to the dark skin.

But he was deeply unconscious, and it was possible that one foot was hopelessly mutilated.

For a moment Warwick lay quite still, looking his situation squarely in the face. He did not believe that either he or his attendant was mortally or even very seriously hurt. True, one of his arms had suffered paralysis, but there was no reason for thinking it had been permanently injured. His hand would be badly scarred, but soon as good as ever. The real question that faced them was that of getting back to the bungalow.

Walking was out of the question. His whole body was bruised and lacerated, and he was already dangerously weak from loss of blood. It would take all his energy, these first few hours, to keep his consciousness. Besides, it was perfectly obvious that Singhai could not walk. And English gentlemen do not desert their servants at a time like this. The real mystery lay in the fact that the beaters had not already found and rescued them.

He wore a watch with luminous dial on his left wrist, and he managed to get it before his eyes. And then understanding came to him. A full hour had passed since he and his servant had fought the mugger in the ford. And the utter silence of early night had come down over the jungle.

There was only one thing to believe. The beaters had evidently heard him shoot, sought in vain for him in the thickets, possibly passed within a few hundred feet of him, and because he had been unconscious he had not heard them or called to them, and now they had given him up for lost. He remembered with bitterness how all of them had been sure that an encounter with Nahara would cost him his life, and would thus be all the more quick to believe he had died in her talons. Nahara had her mate and her own lameness to avenge, they had said, attributing in their superstition human emotions to the brute natures of animals. It would have been quite useless for Warwick to attempt to tell them that the male tiger, in the mind of her wicked mate, was no longer even a memory, and that premeditated vengeance is an emotion almost unknown in the animal world. Without leaders or encouragement, and terribly frightened by the scene they had beheld before the village, they had quickly given up any attempt to find his body. There had been none among them coolheaded enough to reason out which trail he had likely taken and thus look for him by the ford. Likely they were already huddled in their thatched huts, waiting till daylight.

Then he called in the darkness. A heavy body brushed through the creepers and, stepping falsely, broke a twig. He thought at first that it might be one of the villagers, coming to look for him. But at once the step was silenced.

Warwick had a disturbing thought that the creature

that had broken the twig had not gone away, but was crouching down, in a curious manner, in the deep shadows. Nahara had returned to her hunting.

## IV

"Some time I, too, will be a hunter of tigers," Little Shikara told his mother when the beaters began to circle through the bamboos. "To carry a gun beside Warwick Sahib — and to be honored in the circle under the tree!"

But his mother hardly listened. She was quivering with fright. She had seen the last part of the drama in front of the village, and she was too frightened even to notice the curious imperturbability of her little son. But there was no orderly retreat after Little Shikara had heard the two reports of the rifle. At first there were only the shouts of the beaters, singularly high-pitched, much running back and forth in the shadows, and then a pell-mell scurry to the shelter of the villages.

For a few minutes there was wild excitement at the village gates. Warwick Sahib was dead, they said — they had heard the shots and run to the place of firing and beat up and down through the bamboos, and Warwick Sahib had surely been killed and carried off by the tigress. This dreadful story told, most of the villagers went to hide at once in their huts; only a little circle of the bravest men hovered at the gate. They watched with drawn faces the growing darkness.

But there was one among them who was not yet a man grown, a boy so small that he could hover, unnoticed, in

the very smallest of the terrible shadow patches. He was Little Shikara, and he was shocked to the very depths of his worshipping heart. For Warwick had been his hero, the greatest man of all time, and he felt himself burning with indignation that the beaters should return so soon. And it was a curious fact that he had not as yet been infected with the contagion of terror that was being passed from man to man among the villagers. Perhaps his indignation was too absorbing an emotion to leave room for terror, and perhaps, far down in his childish spirit, he was made of different stuff. He was a child of the jungle, and perhaps he had shared of that great imperturbability and impassiveness that is the eternal trait of the wildernesses.

He went up to one of the younger beaters who had told and retold a story of catching a glimpse of Nahara in the thickets until no one was left to tell it to. He was standing silent — and Little Shikara thought it possible that he might reach his ears.

“Give ear, Puran,” he pleaded. “Didst thou look for his body beside the ford over Tarai stream?”

“Nay, little one — though I passed within one hundred paces.”

“Dost thou not know that he and Singhai would of a certainty cross at the ford to reach the fringe of jungle from which he might watch the eastern field? Some of you looked on the trail beside the ford, but none looked at the ford itself. And the sound of the rifle seemed to come from thence.”

“But why did he not call out?”

“Dead men could not call, but at least ye might have frightened Nahara from the body. But perhaps he is wounded, unable to speak, and lies there still —”

But Puran had found another listener for his story, and speedily forgot the boy. He hurried over to another of the villagers, Khusru the hunter.

“Did no one look by the ford?” he asked, almost sobbing. “For that is the place he had gone.”

The native’s eyes seemed to light. “*Hai*, little one, thou hast thought of what thy elders had forgotten. There is level land there, and clear. And I shall go at the first ray of dawn —”

“But not tonight, Khusru —?”

“Nay, little sinner! Wouldst thou have me torn to pieces?”

Lastly Little Shikara went to his own father, and they had a moment’s talk at the outskirts of the throng. But the answer was nay — just the same. Even his brave father would not go to look for the body until daylight came. The boy felt his skin prickling all over.

“But perhaps he is only wounded — and left to die. If I go and return with word that he is there, wilt thou take others and go and bring him in?”

“*Thou* goest!” His father broke forth in a great roar of laughter. “Why, thou little hawk! One would think that thou wert a hunter of tigers thyself!”

Little Shikara blushed beneath the laughter. For he was a very boyish little boy in most ways. But it seemed



to him that his sturdy young heart was about to break open from bitterness. All of them agreed that Warwick Sahib, perhaps wounded and dying, might be lying by the ford, but none of them would venture forth to see. Unknowing, he was beholding the expression of a certain age-old trait of human nature. Men do not fight ably in the dark. They need their eyes, and they particularly require a definite object to give them determination. If these villagers knew for certain that the Protector of the Poor lay wounded or even dead beside the ford, they would have rallied bravely, encouraged one another with words and oaths, and gone forth to rescue him; but they wholly lacked the courage to venture again into the jungle on any such blind quest as Little Shikara suggested.

But the boy's father should not have laughed. He should have remembered the few past occasions when his straight little son had gone into the jungle alone; and that remembrance should have silenced him. The difficulty lay in the fact that he supposed his boy and he were of the same flesh and that Little Shikara shared his own great dread of the night-curtained jungle. In this he was very badly mistaken. Little Shikara had an inborn understanding and love of the jungle; and except for such material dangers as that of Nahara, he was not afraid of it at all. He had no superstitions in regard to it. Perhaps he was too young. But the main thing that the laugh did was to set off, as a match sets off powder, a whole heartful of unexploded indignation in Shikara's breast. These villagers not only had deserted their patron

and protector, but also they had laughed at the thought of rescue! His own father had laughed at him.

Little Shikara silently left the circle of villagers and turned into the darkness.

At once the jungle silence closed round him. He hadn't dreamed that the noise of the villagers would die so quickly. Although he could still see the flame of the fire at the village gate behind him, it was almost as if he had at once dropped off into another world. Great flowers poured perfume down upon him, and at seemingly a great distance he heard the faint murmur of the wind.

At first, deep down in his heart, he had really not intended to go all the way. He had expected to steal clear to the outer edge of the firelight; and then stand listening to the darkness for such impressions as the jungle would choose to give him. But there had been no threshold, no interlude of preparation. The jungle in all its mystery had folded about him at once.

He trotted softly down the elephant trail, a dim, fleet shadow that even the keen eyes of Nahara could scarcely have seen. At first he was too happy to be afraid. He was always happy when the jungle closed round him. Besides, if Nahara had killed, she would be full-fed by now and not to be feared. Little Shikara hastened on, trembling all over with a joyous sort of excitement.

If a single bird had flapped its wings in the branches, if one little rodent had stirred in the underbrush, Little Shikara would likely have turned back. But the jungle gods, knowing their son, stilled all the forest voices. He

crept on, still looking now and again over his shoulder to see the village fire. It still made a bright yellow triangle in the dusk behind him. He didn't stop to think that he was doing a thing most grown natives and many white men would not have dared to do — to follow a jungle trail unarmed at night. If he had stopped to think at all, he simply would have been unable to go on. He was only following his instincts, voices that such forces as maturity and grown-up intelligence and self-consciousness obscure in older men — and the terror of the jungle could not touch him. He went straight to do what service he could for the white sahib that was one of his lesser gods.

Time after time he halted, but always he pushed on a few more feet. Now he was over halfway to the ford, clear to the forks in the trail. And then he turned about with a little gasp of fear.

The light from the village had gone out. The thick foliage of the jungle had come between.

He was really frightened now. It wasn't that he was afraid he couldn't get back. The trail was broad and hard and quite gray in the moonlight. But those far-off beams of light had been a solace to his spirit, a reminder that he had not yet broken all ties with the village. He halted, intending to turn back.

Then a thrill began at his scalp and went clear to his bare toes. Faint through the jungle silences he heard Warwick Sahib calling to his faithless beaters. The voice had an unmistakable quality of distress.

Certain of the villagers — a very few of them — said

afterward that Little Shikara continued on because he was afraid to go back. They said that he looked upon the Heaven-born sahib as a source of all power, in whose protection no harm could befall him, and he sped toward him because the distance was shorter than back to the haven of fire at the village. But those who could look deeper into Little Shikara's soul knew different. In some degree at least he hastened on down that jungle trail of peril because he knew that his idol was in distress, and by laws that went deep he knew he must go to his aid.

## v

The first few minutes after Warwick had heard a living step in the thickets he spent in trying to reach his rifle. He carried other cartridges in the right-hand trousers pocket, but after a few minutes of futile effort it became perfectly evident that he was not able to reach them. His right arm was useless, and the fingers of his left, lacerated by the mugger's bite, refused to take hold.

He had, however, three of the five shells the rifle held still in his gun. The single question that remained was whether or not they would be of use to him.

The rifle lay half under him, its stock protruding from beneath his body. With the elbow of his left arm he was able to work it out. Considering the difficulties under which he worked, he made amazingly few false motions; and yet he worked with swiftness. Warwick was a man who had been schooled and trained by many dangers; he had learned to face them with open eyes and steady

hands, to judge with unclouded thought the exact percentage of his chances. He knew now that he must work swiftly. The shape in the shadow was not going to wait all night.

But at that moment the hope of preserving his life that he had clung to until now broke like a bubble in the sunlight. He could not lift the gun to swing and aim it at a shape in the darkness. With his mutilated hands he could not cock the strong-springed hammer. And if he could do both these things with his fumbling, bleeding, lacerated fingers, his right hand could not be made to pull the trigger. Warwick Sahib knew at last just where he stood. Yet if human sight could have penetrated that dusk, it would have beheld no change of expression in the lean face.

An English gentleman lay at the frontier of death. But that occasioned neither fawning nor a loss of his rigid self-control.

Two things remained, however, that he might do. One was to call and continue to call, as long as life lasted in his body. He knew perfectly that more than once in the history of India a tiger had been kept at a distance, at least for a short period of time, by shouts alone. In that interlude, perhaps help might come from the village. The second thing was almost as impossible as raising and firing the rifle, but by the luck of the gods he might achieve it. He wanted to find Singhai's knife and hold it compressed in his palm.

It wasn't that he had any vain hopes of repelling the

tiger's attack with a single knife blade that would be practically impossible for his mutilated hand to hold. Nahara had five or so knife blades in every paw and a whole set of them in her mouth. She could stand on four legs and fight, and Warwick could not lift himself on one elbow and yet wield the blade. But there were other things to be done with blades, even held loosely in the palm, at a time like this.

He knew rather too much of the way of tigers. They do not always kill swiftly. It is the tiger way to tease, long moments, with half-bared talons; to let the prey crawl away a few feet for the rapture of leaping at it again; to fondle with an exquisite cruelty for moments that seem endless to its prey. A knife, on the other hand, kills quickly. Warwick much preferred the latter death.

And even as he called, again and again, he began to feel about in the grass with his lacerated hand for the hilt of the knife. Nahara was steadily stealing toward him through the shadows.

The great tigress was at the height of her hunting madness. The earlier adventure of the evening when she had missed her stroke, the stir and tumult of the beaters in the wood, her many days of hunger had all combined to intensify her passion. And finally there had come the knowledge, in subtle ways, that two of her own kind of game were lying wounded and helpless beside the ford.

But even the royal tiger never forgets some small measure of its caution. She did not charge at once. The game looked so easy that it was in some way suggestive of a

trap. She crept forward, a few feet at a time. The wild blood began to leap through the great veins. The hair went stiff on the neck muscles.

But Warwick shouted; and the sound for an instant appalled her. She lurked in the shadows. And then, as she made a false step, Warwick heard her for the first time.

Again she crept forward, to pause when Warwick raised his voice the second time. The man knew enough to call at intervals rather than continuously. A long, continued outcry would very likely stretch the tiger's nerves to a breaking point and hurl her into a frenzy that would probably result in a death-dealing charge. Every few seconds he called again. In the intervals between, the tiger crept forward. Her excitement grew upon her. She crouched lower. Her sinewy tail had whipped softly at first; now it was lashing almost to her sides. And finally it began to have a slight vertical movement that Warwick, fortunately for his spirit, could not see.

Then the little light that the moon poured down was suddenly reflected in Nahara's eyes. All at once they burned out of the dusk; two blue-green circles of fire fifty feet distant in the darkness. At that Warwick gasped — for the first time. In another moment the great cat would be in range — and he had not yet found the knife. Nothing remained to believe but that it was lost in the mud of the ford, fifty feet distant, and that the last dread avenue of escape was cut off.

But at that instant the gasp gave way to a whispered

oath of wonder. Some living creature was running lightly down the trail toward him — soft, light feet that came with amazing swiftness. For once in his life Warwick did not know where he stood. For once he was the chief figure of a situation he did not entirely understand. He tried to probe into the darkness with his tired eyes.

“Here I am!” he called. The tiger, starting to creep forward once more, halted at the voice. A small straight figure sped like an arrow out of the thickets and halted at his side.

It was such an astounding appearance as for an instant completely paralyzes the mental faculties. Warwick’s first emotion was simply a great and hopeless astonishment. Long inured to the mystery of the jungle, he thought he had passed the point where any earthly happening could actually bewilder him. But in spite of it, in spite of the fire-eyed peril in the darkness, he was quite himself when he spoke. The voice that came out of the silence was wholly steady — a kindly, almost amused voice of one who knows life as it is and who has mastered his own destiny.

“Who in the world?” he asked in the vernacular.

“It is I — Little Shikara,” a tremulous voice answered. Except for the tremor he could not keep from his tone, he spoke as one man to another.

Warwick knew at once that Little Shikara was not yet aware of the presence of the tiger fifty feet distant in the shadows. But he knew nothing else. The whole situation was beyond his ken.



But his instincts were manly and true. "Then run speedily, little one," he whispered, "back to the village. There is danger here in the dark."

Little Shikara tried to speak, and he swallowed painfully. A lump had come in his throat that at first would not let him talk. "Nay, Protector of the Poor!" he answered. "I—I came alone. And I—I am thy servant."

Warwick's heart bounded. Not since his youth had left him to a gray world had his strong heart leaped in just this way before. "Merciful God!" he whispered in English. "Has a child come to save me?" Then he whipped again into the vernacular and spoke swiftly, for no further seconds were to be wasted. "Little Shikara, have you ever fired a gun?"

"No, Sahib —"

"Then lift it up and rest it across my body. Thou knowest how it is held —"

Little Shikara didn't know exactly, but he rested the gun on Warwick's body, and he had seen enough target practice to crook his finger about the trigger. And together, the strangest pair of huntsmen that the Indian stars ever looked down upon, they waited.

"It is Nahara," Warwick explained softly. For he had decided to be frank with Little Shikara, trusting all to the courage of a child. "It all depends on thee. Pull back the hammer with thy thumb."

Little Shikara obeyed. He drew it back until it clicked, and did not, as Warwick had feared, let it slip through his

fingers back against the breach. "Yes, Sahib," he whispered breathlessly. His little brave heart seemed about to explode in his breast. But it was the test, and he knew he must not waver in the sahib's eyes.

"It is Nahara, and thou art a man," Warwick said again. "And now thou must wait until thou seest her eyes."

So they strained into the darkness; and in an instant more they saw again the two circles of greenish, smoldering fire. They were quite near now—Nahara was almost in leaping range.

"Thou wilt look through the little hole at the rear and then along the barrel," Warwick ordered swiftly, "and thou must see the two eyes along the little notch in front."

"I see, Sahib—and between the eyes," came the same breathless whisper. The little brown body held quite still. Warwick could not even feel it trembling against his own. For the moment, by virtue of some strange prank of Shiv, the jungle gods were giving their own strength to this little brown son of theirs beside the ford.

"Thou wilt not jerk or move?"

"Nay, Sahib." And he spoke true. The world might break to pieces or blink out, but he would not throw off his aim by any terror motions. They could see the tiger's outline now—the lithe, low-hung body, the tail that twitched up and down.

"Then pull the trigger," Warwick whispered.

The whole jungle world rocked and trembled from the violence of the report.

When the villagers, aroused by the roar of the rifle and led by Khusru and Puran and Little Shikara's father, rushed down with their firebrands to the ford, their first thought was that they had come only to the presence of the dead. Three human beings lay very still beside the stream, and fifty feet in the shadows something else, that obviously was not a human being, lay very still, too. But they were not to have any such horror story to tell their wives. Only one of the three by the ford, Singhai, the gunbearer, was even really unconscious; Little Shikara, the rifle still held lovingly in his arms, had gone into a half-faint from fear and nervous exhaustion, and Warwick Sahib had merely closed his eyes to the darting light of the firebrands. The only death that had occurred was that of Nahara the tigress — and she had a neat hole bored completely through her neck. To all evidence, she had never stirred after Little Shikara's bullet had gone home.

After much confusion and shouting and falling over one another, and gazing at Little Shikara as if he were some new kind of ghost, the villagers got a stretcher each for Singhai and the Protector of the Poor. And when they got them well loaded into them, and Little Shikara had quite come to himself and was standing with some bewilderment in a circle of staring townspeople, a clear, commanding voice ordered that they all be silent. Warwick Sahib was going to make what was the nearest approach to a speech that he had made since various of his friends had decoyed him to a dinner in London some years before.

The words that he said, the short vernacular words that have a way of coming straight to the point, established Little Shikara as a legend through all that corner of British India. It was Little Shikara who had come along through the jungle, said he; it was Little Shikara's shining eyes that had gazed along the barrel, and it was his own brown finger that had pulled the trigger. Thus, said Warwick, he would get the bounty that the British Government offered — British rupees that to a child's eyes would be past counting. Thus in time, with Warwick's influence, his would be a great voice through all of India. For small as he was and not yet grown, he was of the true breed.

After the shouting was done, Warwick turned to Little Shikara to see how he thought upon all these things. "Thou shalt have training for the army, little one, where thy good nerve will be of use, and thou shalt be a native officer, along with the sons of princes. I, myself, will see to it, for I do not hold my life so cheap that I will forget the thing that thou hast done tonight."

And he meant what he said. The villagers stood still when they saw his earnest face. "And what, little hawk, wilt thou have more?" he asked.

Little Shikara trembled and raised his eyes. "Only sometimes to ride with thee, in thy howdah, as thy servant, when thou again seekest the tiger."

The whole circle laughed at this. They were just human, after all. Their firebrands were held high and gleamed on Little Shikara's dusky face and made a luster in his dark eyes. The circle, roaring with laughter, did

not hear the sahib's reply, but they did see him nod his head.

"I would not dare go without thee now," Warwick told him.

And thus Little Shikara's dreams came true — to be known through many villages as a hunter of tigers and a brave follower and comrade of the forest trails. And thus he came into his own — in those far-off glades of Burma, in the jungles of the Manipur.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. What is Little Shikara doing when you first meet him?
2. What do the villagers think of Little Shikara at the beginning of the story?
3. Why does Mr. Warwick smile upon Little Shikara when he sees him in the crowd?
4. What is Little Shikara's greatest ambition? What do his father and mother want him to be when he grows up?
5. What stories can you tell of children who want to do a certain thing when they grow up because some older person has aroused their hero worship?
6. Why do the natives call Mr. Warwick "Protector of the Poor"?
7. What sends Mr. Warwick upon a second tiger hunt?
8. What makes Nahara an especially dangerous enemy?
9. Describe Nahara before and after she breaks the law of the jungle.
10. What dreadful misfortune befalls Warwick before he meets Nahara on this hunt?

11. In what ways do Warwick and his gun-carrier, Singhai, show their loyalty to each other?
12. How is Singhai different from the other villagers? How is Little Shikara different?
13. What leads Little Shikara on and on into the jungle? How does the author make this part of the story seem real to you?
14. Why is Warwick eager to get Singhai's knife?
15. How is it that a boy without training as a hunter is able to do what Little Shikara does?
16. What rewards does he gain? Which reward makes him happiest?

#### *If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. Write a letter that you imagine Mr. Warwick might write to a fellow hunter in England telling him about the hunt for Nahara.
2. Make up the conversation that might have taken place when Little Shikara returned to the hut with his parents.
3. If you have seen *Elephant Boy*, *Gunga Din*, or another movie in which a boy is the hero, compare that boy with Little Shikara.
4. Write or tell about a narrow escape you once had.

#### *If You Want to Read*

- "The Most Dangerous Game," Richard Connell
- "The Elephant Remembers," Edison Marshall
- "Shag of the Packs," Edison Marshall
- "Bahadur Guj," Sir John Campbell (another exciting story of hunting)
- "The Tanjsar Tiger," Arlo Bates
- "White Tiger," Samuel Scoville, Jr.
- Stories of Mowgli in Kipling's *Jungle Books*
- "Story of Saudin" by himself, *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1939 (A story told by a jungle boy who was brought to New York by Martin Johnson.)

## THE SUMMER OF THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE HORSE

by William Saroyan

THINK of something that you enjoyed more than anything else — the most delightful time you ever had: a particular summer vacation, a trip away from home, a Christmas holiday with a household of company. Have you ever tried to tell someone else, your brother or sister, perhaps, what a perfectly wonderful time you have had and found that somehow you could not get into words your joy and delight? Don't be surprised if you have failed, for to make someone else feel your joy is difficult. See if you think William Saroyan has succeeded in making you feel the keen joy two Armenian boys felt in their "Summer of the Beautiful White Horse."

WILLIAM SAROYAN tells you his own story of his life: "I was born August 31, 1908, in Fresno, California. I began selling papers when I was not quite eight. A year or two later I began writing. The first thing I ever wrote was an essay-story. I became a telegraph messenger boy when I was thirteen. I worked from four in the afternoon till midnight, except during school vacations, when I worked all day as a messenger and half the night as a clerk. On the side I read every good writer I could discover and tried to learn to write. I went to public schools until I was fifteen. I learned to operate the typewriter when I was fourteen. I bought a phonograph for ten dollars when I was thirteen. I bought a typewriter for thirty-five dollars when I was fifteen. When I was sixteen I pruned vines with Mexican and Japanese laborers in my uncle's vineyard, north of Sanger, California. I went to San Francisco when I was seventeen. When I was twenty I went to New York. I returned to San Francisco five months later, early in 1929. My first short story, 'The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze,' was accepted by the editors of *Story Magazine* about Christmas time, 1933, and published in February, 1934. My first book, bearing the title of my first story, was published in October, 1934."

Since that time Mr. Saroyan has written a great many stories and sketches. Two plays, *My Heart's in the Highlands* and *The Time of Your Life*, have been successfully produced by the Theatre Guild in New York City.



## THE SUMMER OF THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE HORSE

ONE day back there in the good old days when I was nine and the world was full of every imaginable kind of magnificence, and life was still a delightful and mysterious dream, my cousin Mourad, who was considered crazy by everybody who knew him except me, came to my house at four in the morning and woke me up by tapping on the window of my room.

"Aram,"<sup>1</sup> he said.

I jumped out of bed and looked out the window.

I couldn't believe what I saw.

It wasn't morning yet, but it was summer, and with daybreak not many minutes around the corner of the world it was light enough for me to know I wasn't dreaming.

My cousin Mourad was sitting on a beautiful white horse.

I stuck my head out of the window and rubbed my eyes.

"Yes," he said in Armenian. "It's a horse. You're not dreaming. Make it quick if you want to ride."

I knew my cousin Mourad enjoyed being alive more than anybody else who had ever fallen into the world by mistake, but this was more than even I could believe.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Saroyan does not use quotation marks, but they have been added here to make it easier for you to understand the story.

In the first place, my earliest memories had been memories of horses and my first longings had been longings to ride.

This was the wonderful part.

In the second place, we were poor.

This was the part that wouldn't permit me to believe what I saw.

We were poor. We had no money. Our whole tribe was poverty-stricken. Every branch of the Garoghlanian family was living in the most amazing and comical poverty in the world. Nobody could understand where we ever got money enough to keep us with food in our bellies, not even the old men of the family. Most important of all, though, we were famous for our honesty. We had been famous for our honesty for something like eleven centuries, even when we had been the wealthiest family in what we liked to think was the world. We were proud first, honest next, and after that we believed in right and wrong. None of us would take advantage of anybody in the world, let alone steal.

Consequently, even though I could see the horse, so magnificent; even though I could *smell* it, so lovely; even though I could *hear* it breathing, so exciting; I couldn't *believe* the horse had anything to do with my cousin Mourad or with me or with any of the other members of our family, asleep or awake, because I *knew* my cousin Mourad couldn't have *bought* the horse, and if he couldn't have bought it he must have *stolen* it, and I refused to believe he had stolen it.

No member of the Garoghlanian family could be a thief.

I stared first at my cousin and then at the horse. There was a pious stillness and humor in each of them which on the one hand delighted me and on the other frightened me.

"Mourad," I said, "where did you steal this horse?"

"Leap out of the window," he said, "if you want to ride."

It was true, then. He *had* stolen the horse. There was no question about it. He had come to invite me to ride or not, as I chose.

Well, it seemed to me stealing a horse for a ride was not the same thing as stealing something else, such as money. For all I knew, maybe it wasn't stealing at all. If you were crazy about horses the way my cousin Mourad and I were, it wasn't stealing. It wouldn't become stealing until we offered to sell the horse, which of course I knew we would never do.

"Let me put on some clothes," I said.

"All right," he said, "but hurry."

I leaped into my clothes.

I jumped down to the yard from the window and leaped up on to the horse behind my cousin Mourad.

That year we lived at the edge of town, on Walnut Avenue. Behind our house was the country: vineyards, orchards, irrigation ditches, and country roads. In less than three minutes we were on Olive Avenue, and then the horse began to trot. The air was new and lovely to

breathe. The feel of the horse running was wonderful. My cousin Mourad, who was considered one of the craziest members of our family, began to sing. I mean, he began to roar.

Every family has a crazy streak in it somewhere, and my cousin Mourad was considered the natural descendant of the crazy streak in our tribe. Before him was our uncle Khosrove, an enormous man with a powerful head of black hair and the largest mustache in the San Joaquin valley, a man so furious in temper, so irritable, so impatient that he stopped anyone from talking by roaring, "*It is no harm; pay no attention to it.*"

That was all, no matter what anybody happened to be talking about. Once it was his own son Arak running eight blocks to the barber shop where his father was having his mustache trimmed to tell him their house was on fire. This man Khosrove sat up in the chair and roared, "*It is no harm; pay no attention to it.*" The barber said, "But the boy says your house is on fire." So Khosrove roared, "Enough, it is no harm, I say."

My cousin Mourad was regarded as the natural descendant of this man, although Mourad's father was Zorab, who was practical and nothing else. That's how it was in our tribe. A man could be the father of his son's flesh, but that did not mean that he was also the father of his spirit. The distribution of the various kinds of spirit of our tribe had been from the beginning capricious and vagrant.

We rode and my cousin Mourad sang. For all any-

body knew we were still in the old country where, at least according to some of our neighbors, we belonged. We let the horse run as long as it felt like running.

At last my cousin Mourad said, "Get down, I want to ride alone."

"Will you let me ride alone?" I said.

"That is up to the horse," my cousin said. "Get down."

"The horse will let me ride," I said.

"We shall see," he said. "Don't forget that I have a way with a horse."

"Well," I said, "any way you have with a horse, I have also."

"For the sake of your safety," he said, "let us hope so. Get down."

"All right," I said, "but remember you've got to let me try to ride alone."

I got down and my cousin Mourad kicked his heels into the horse and shouted, "Vazire, run." The horse stood on its hind legs, snorted, and burst into a fury of speed that was the loveliest thing I had ever seen. My cousin Mourad raced the horse across a field of dry grass to an irrigation ditch, crossed the ditch on the horse, and five minutes later returned, dripping wet.

The sun was coming up.

"Now it's my turn to ride," I said.

My cousin Mourad got off the horse.

"Ride," he said.

I leaped to the back of the horse and for a moment

knew the awfulest fear imaginable. The horse did not move.

"Kick into his muscles," my cousin Mourad said. "What are you waiting for? We've got to take him back before everybody in the world is up and about."

I kicked into the muscles of the horse. Once again it reared and snorted. Then it began to run. I didn't know what to do. Instead of running across the field to the irrigation ditch the horse ran down the road to the vineyard of Dikran Halabian where it began to leap over vines. The horse leaped over seven vines before I fell. Then it continued running.

My cousin Mourad came running down the road.

"I'm not worried about you," he shouted. "We've got to get that horse. You go this way and I'll go this way. If you come upon him, be kindly. I'll be near."

I continued down the road and my cousin Mourad went across the field toward the irrigation ditch.

It took him half an hour to find the horse and bring him back.

"All right," he said, "jump on. The whole world is awake now."

"What will we do?" I said.

"Well," he said, "we'll either take him back or hide him until tomorrow morning."

He didn't sound worried, and I knew he'd hide him and not take him back. Not for a while, at any rate.

"Where will we hide him?" I said.

"I know a place," he said.

"How long ago did you steal this horse?" I said.

It suddenly dawned on me that he had been taking these early morning rides for some time and had come for me this morning only because he knew how much I longed to ride.

"Who said anything about stealing a horse?" he said.

"Anyhow," I said, "how long ago did you begin riding every morning?"

"Not until this morning," he said.

"Are you telling the truth?" I said.

"Of course not," he said, "but if we are found out, that's what you're to say. I don't want both of us to be liars. All you know is that we started riding this morning."

"All right," I said.

He walked the horse quietly to the barn of a deserted vineyard which at one time had been the pride of a farmer named Fetvajian. There was some oats and dry alfalfa in the barn.

We began walking home.

"It wasn't easy," he said, "to get the horse to behave so nicely. At first it wanted to run wild, but, as I've told you, I have a way with a horse. I can get it to want to do anything I want it to do. Horses understand me."

"How do you do it?" I said.

"I have an understanding with a horse," he said.

"Yes, but what sort of an understanding?" I said.

"A simple and honest one," he said.

"Well," I said, "I wish I knew how to reach an understanding like that with a horse."

"You're still a small boy," he said. "When you get to be thirteen you'll know how to do it."

I went home and ate a hearty breakfast.

That afternoon my uncle Khosrove came to our house for coffee and cigarettes. He sat in the parlor, sipping and smoking and remembering the old country. Then another visitor arrived, a farmer named John Byro, an Assyrian who, out of loneliness, had learned to speak Armenian. My mother brought the lonely visitor coffee and tobacco, and he rolled a cigarette and sipped and smoked, and then at last, sighing sadly, he said, "My white horse which was stolen last month is still gone. I cannot understand it."

My uncle Khosrove became very irritated and shouted, "It's no harm. What is the loss of a horse? Haven't we all lost the homeland? What is this crying over a horse?"

"That may be all right for you, a city dweller, to say," John Byro said, "but what of my survey? What good is a survey without a horse?"

"Pay no attention to it," my uncle Khosrove roared.

"I walked ten miles to get here," John Byro said.

"You have legs," my uncle Khosrove shouted.

"My left leg pains me," the farmer said.

"Pay no attention to it," my uncle Khosrove roared.

"That horse cost me sixty dollars," the farmer said.

"I spit on money," my uncle Khosrove said.



He got up and stalked out of the house, slamming the screen door.

My mother explained.

"He has a gentle heart," she said. "It is simply that he is homesick and such a large man."

The farmer went away, and I ran over to my cousin Mourad's house.

He was sitting under a peach tree, trying to repair the hurt wing of a young robin which could not fly. He was talking to the bird.

"What is it?" he said.

"The farmer, John Byro," I said. "He visited our house. He wants his horse. You've had it a month. I want you to promise not to take it back until I learn to ride."

"It will take you a year to learn to ride," my cousin said.

"We could keep the horse a year," I said.

My cousin Mourad leaped to his feet.

"What?" he roared. "Are you inviting a member of the Garoghlanian family to steal? The horse must go back to its true owner."

"When?" I said.

"In six months at the latest," he said.

He threw the bird into the air, and it tried hard, almost fell twice, and at last flew away, high and straight.

Early every morning for two weeks my cousin Mourad and I took the horse out of the barn of the deserted vineyard where we were hiding it and rode it, and every morning the horse, when it was my turn to ride alone, leaped

over grapevines and small trees and threw me and ran away. Nevertheless, I hoped in time to learn to ride the way my cousin Mourad rode.

One morning on the way to Fetvajian's deserted vineyard we ran into the farmer, John Byro, who was on his way to town.

"Let me do the talking," my cousin Mourad said. "I have a way with farmers."

"Good morning, John Byro," my cousin Mourad said to the farmer.

The farmer studied the horse eagerly.

"Good morning, sons of my friends," he said. "What is the name of your horse?"

"My Heart," my cousin Mourad said in Armenian.

"A lovely name," John Byro said, "for a lovely horse. I could swear it is the horse that was stolen from me many weeks ago. May I look into its mouth?"

"Of course," Mourad said.

The farmer looked into the mouth of the horse.

"Tooth for tooth," he said. "I would swear it is my horse if I didn't know your parents. The fame of your family for honesty is well known to me. Yet the horse is the twin of my horse. A suspicious man would believe his eyes instead of his heart. Good day, my young friends."

"Good day, John Byro," my cousin Mourad said.

Early the following morning we took the horse to John Byro's vineyard and put it in the barn. The dogs followed us around without making a sound.

"The dogs," I whispered to my cousin Mourad. "I thought they would bark."

"They would at somebody else," he said. "I have a way with dogs."

My cousin Mourad put his arms around the horse, pressed his nose into the horse's nose, patted it, and then we went away.

That afternoon John Byro came to our house in his surrery and showed my mother the horse that had been stolen and returned.

"I do not know what to think," he said. "The horse is stronger than ever. Better tempered too. I thank God."

My uncle Khosrove, who was in the parlor, became irritated and shouted, "Quiet, man, quiet. Your horse has been returned. Pay no attention to it."

That summer of the beautiful white horse was one of the happiest I ever knew, even if I didn't learn to ride.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. How old are the boys the summer that they ride the beautiful white horse?
2. What two facts make Aram afraid that he is only dreaming when he sees Mourad on the horse?
3. Why does Aram stress his family's record of eleven centuries of honesty?
4. What is remarkable about Uncle Khosrove? How is Mourad like him?
5. How does Aram excuse the stealing of the horse?

6. Why does Mourad lie to Aram and say that he is riding the horse for the first time?
7. What happens to each boy when he rides the horse alone?
8. How does Mourad explain his skill in horsemanship? For what other exploits does he give the same explanation?
9. What amusing explanation does Aram's mother make for Uncle Khosrove's rudeness?
10. When John Byro meets the boys, do you think he recognizes the horse? What does he say that makes the boys return it?
11. Are the boys exceptions to the honesty of their tribe, or do you think that they are really honest?
12. What would you have done if you had been Aram and Mourad had invited you to ride?

*If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. The Winter of My First Skates
2. The First Time I Was Allowed to Go Shopping Alone
3. The Summer of My First Bicycle (or of My First Pony)
4. The Summer of My First Canoe Trip
5. My First Movie

*If You Want to Read*

*The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens*, the early chapters in which he tells of his present of a pony  
"Hosses," Charles Wright Gray, ed. (short stories about horses)  
"Lady New Luck," Clinton Dangerfield  
"The Look of Eagles," John Taintor Foote  
"The Black Hero of the Ranges," Enos A. Mills  
"Five Ripe Pears," *Little Children, The Trouble with Tigers, and Native American* (more stories about Aram and Mourad), William Saroyan

## GUINEA PIG

by Ruth McKenney

HAVE you ever gone to a summer camp for boys or girls? Do you remember what good times you had and how you came home with amusing stories to tell your family and how you all laughed over some of your adventures? Did you learn to swim at your camps or have lessons in lifesaving? In "Guinea Pig" you will read the story of a girl who had unusual experiences while serving as the guinea pig in the lifesaving classes at a summer camp.

"GUINEA PIG" is taken from *My Sister Eileen* by Ruth McKenney. She says in a foreword that the book tells of "the awful things my sister Eileen and I lived through when we were growing up. Nobody will believe the very worst things that happened to Eileen and me during our tender years. So the following account of the Life and Sufferings of the McKenney sisters is, I admit, pretty watered down. I trust, therefore, that the reader will find it at least faintly credible. . . . For it's all true, no matter how terrible."

The stories tell of amusing incidents in the lives of two merry, lively girls who were always getting mixed up in odd scrapes that seem funny to the reader, though, as in "Guinea Pig," perhaps they were not so funny at the time to either Eileen or Ruth.

The events in Ruth McKenney's career not told in *My Sister Eileen* are also interesting, if somewhat more serious. She worked her way through Ohio State University by selling books, waiting on table, and reporting for one of the Columbus, Ohio, newspapers, where for two years in succession she won state-wide awards for her skill as a reporter, especially as a writer of feature stories. In 1933 she and Eileen migrated to New York City. There Ruth got a job on one of the big newspapers. Three years ago she gave up that job to devote herself to writing *My Sister Eileen* and another very different book, *Industrial Valley*, which is as scholarly and serious as *My Sister Eileen* is funny.

## GUINEA PIG

I WAS nearly drowned, in my youth, by a Red Cross Lifesaving Examiner, and I once suffered, in the noble cause of saving human life from a watery grave, a black eye which was a perfect daisy and embarrassed me for days. Looking back on my agonies, I feel that none of my sacrifices, especially the black eye, were in the least worth while. Indeed, to be brutally frank about it, I feel that the whole modern school of scientific lifesaving is a lot of hogwash.

Of course, I've had rather bad luck with lifesavers, right from the beginning. Long before I ever had any dealings with professional lifesavers my sister nearly drowned me, quite by mistake. My father once took us to a northern Michigan fishing camp, where we found the life very dull. He used to go trolling for bass on our little lake all day long, and at night come home to our lodge, dead-beat and minus any bass. In the meantime Eileen and I, who were nine and ten at the time, used to take an old rowboat out to a shallow section of the lake and, sitting in the hot sun, feed worms to an unexciting variety of small, undernourished fish called gillies. We hated the whole business.

Father, however, loved to fish, even if he didn't catch a single fish in three weeks, which on this trip he didn't. One night, however, he carried his enthusiasm beyond a decent pitch. He decided to go bass fishing after dark,

and rather than leave us alone in the lodge and up to goodness knows what, he ordered us to take our boat and row along after him.

Eileen and I were very bored rowing around in the dark, and finally, in desperation, we began to stand up and rock the boat, which resulted, at last, in my falling into the lake with a mighty splash.

When I came up, choking and mad as anything, Eileen saw me struggling, and, as she always says with a catch in her voice, she only meant to help me. Good intentions, however, are of little importance in a situation like that. For she grabbed an oar out of the lock and with an uncertain gesture hit me square on the chin.

I went down with a howl of pain. Eileen, who could not see much in the darkness, was now really frightened. The cold water revived me after the blow, and I came to the surface, considerably weakened but still able to swim over to the boat. Whereupon Eileen, in a noble attempt to give me the oar to grab, raised it once again, and socked me square on the top of the head. I went down again, this time without a murmur, and my last thought was a vague wonder that my own sister should want to murder me with a rowboat oar.

As for Eileen, she heard the dull impact of the oar on my head and saw the shadowy figure of her sister disappear. So she jumped in the lake, screeching furiously, and began to flail around in the water, howling for help and looking for me. At this point I came to the surface



and swam over to the boat, with the intention of killing Eileen.

Father, rowing hard, arrived just in time to pull us both out of the water and prevent me from attacking Eileen with the rowboat anchor. The worst part about the whole thing, as far as I was concerned, was that Eileen was considered a heroine and Father told everybody in the lake community that she had saved my life. The postmaster put her name in for a medal.

After what I suffered from amateur lifesaving, I should have known enough to avoid even the merest contact with the professional variety of water mercy. I learned too late that being socked with an oar is as nothing compared to what the Red Cross can think up.

From the very beginning of that awful lifesaving course I took the last season I went to a girls' camp, I was a marked woman. The rest of the embryo lifesavers were little, slender maidens, but I am a peasant type, and I was monstrously big for my fourteen years. I approximated, in poundage anyway, the theoretical adult we energetic young lifesavers were scheduled to rescue, and so I was, for the teacher's purpose, the perfect guinea pig.

The first few days of the course were unpleasant for me, but not terribly dangerous. The elementary lifesaving hold, in case you haven't seen some hapless victim being rescued by our brave beach guardians, is a snakelike arrangement for supporting the drowning citizen with one hand while you paddle him in to shore with the other.

You are supposed to wrap your arm around his neck and shoulders, and keep his head well above water by resting it on your collarbone.

This is all very well in theory, of course, but the trick that none of Miss Folgil's little pupils could master was keeping the victim's nose and mouth above the waterline. Time and again I was held in a viselike grip by one of the earnest students with my whole face an inch or two under the billowing waves.

"No, no, Betsy," Miss Folgil would scream through her megaphone, as I felt the water rush into my lungs. "No, no, you must keep the head a little higher." At this point I would begin to kick and struggle, and generally the pupil would have to let go while I came up for air. Miss Folgil was always very stern with me.

"Ruth," she would shriek from her boat, "I insist! You must allow Betsy to tow you all the way in. We come to Struggling in Lesson Six."

This was but the mere beginning, however. A few lessons later we came to the section of the course where we learned how to undress under water in forty seconds. Perhaps I should say we came to the point where the rest of the pupils learned how to get rid of shoes and such while holding their breaths. I never did.

There was quite a little ceremony connected with this part of the course. Miss Folgil, and some lucky creature named as timekeeper and armed with a stop watch, rowed the prospective victim out to deep water. The pupil, dressed in high, laced tennis shoes, long stockings, heavy

bloomers, and a middy blouse, then stood poised at the end of the boat. When the timekeeper yelled "Go!" the future boon to mankind dived into the water and, while holding her breath under the surface, unlaced her shoes and stripped down to her bathing suit. Miss Folgil never explained what connection, if any, this curious rite had with saving human lives.

I had no middy of my own, so I borrowed one of my sister's. My sister was a slender little thing and I was, as I said, robust, which puts it politely. Eileen had some trouble wedging me into that middy, and once in it I looked like a stuffed sausage. It never occurred to me how hard it was going to be to get that middy off, especially when it was wet and slippery.

As we rowed out for my ordeal by undressing, Miss Folgil was snappish and bored.

"Hurry up," she said, looking irritated. "Let's get this over with quick. I don't think you're ready to pass the test, anyway."

I was good and mad when I jumped off the boat and determined to Make Good and show that old Miss Folgil, whom I was beginning to dislike thoroughly. As soon as I was under water, I got my shoes off, and I had no trouble with the bloomers or stockings. I was just beginning to run out of breath when I held up my arms and started to pull off the middy.

Now, the middy, in the event you don't understand the principle of this girl-child garment, is made with a small head opening, long sleeves, and no front opening. You

pull it on and off over your head. You do if you are lucky, that is. I got the middy just past my neck so that my face was covered with heavy linen cloth, when it stuck.

I pulled frantically and my lungs started to burst. Finally I thought the heck with the test, the heck with saving other people's lives, anyway. I came to the surface, a curious sight, my head enfolded in a water-soaked middy blouse. I made a brief sound, a desperate glub-glub, a call for help. My arms were stuck in the middy, and I couldn't swim. I went down. I breathed in large quantities of water and linen cloth.

I came up again, making final frantic appeals. Four feet away sat a professional lifesaver, paying absolutely no attention to somebody drowning right under her nose. I went down again, struggling with last panic-stricken feverishness, fighting water and a middy blouse for my life. At this point the timekeeper pointed out to Miss Folgil that I had been under water for eighty-five seconds, which was quite a time for anybody. Miss Folgil was very annoyed, as she hated to get her bathing suit wet, but, a thoughtful teacher, she picked up her megaphone, shouted to the rest of the class on the beach to watch, and dived in after me.

If I say so myself, I gave her quite a time rescuing me. I presented a new and different problem, and probably am written up in textbooks now under the heading "What to Do When the Victim Is Entangled in a Tight Middy Blouse." Miss Folgil finally towed my still-breathing body over to the boat, reached for her bowie

knife, which she carried on a ring with her whistle, and cut Eileen's middy straight up the front. Then she towed me with Hold No. 2 right in to the shore and delivered me up to the class for artificial respiration. I will never forgive the Red Cross for that terrible trip through the water, when I might have been hoisted into the boat and rowed in except for Miss Folgil's overdeveloped sense of drama and pedagogy.

I tried to quit the lifesaving class after that, but the head councilor at the camp said I must keep on, to show that I was the kind of girl who always finished what she planned to do. Otherwise, she assured me, I would be a weak character and never amount to anything when I grew up.

So I stayed for Lesson 6: "Struggling." After that I didn't care if I never amounted to anything when I grew up. In fact, I hoped I wouldn't. It would serve everybody right, especially Miss Folgil. I came a little late to the class session that day and missed the discussion of theory, always held on the beach before the actual practice in the lake. That was just my hard luck. I was always a child of misfortune. I wonder that I survived my youth at all.

"We were waiting for you, Ruth," Miss Folgil chirped cheerily to me as I arrived, sullen and downcast, at the little group of earnest students sitting on the sand.

"What for?" I said warily. I was determined not to be a guinea pig any more. The last wave had washed over my helpless face.

"You swim out," Miss Folgil went on, ignoring my bad temper, "until you are in deep water — about twelve feet will do. Then you begin to flail around and shout for help. One of the students will swim out to you."

All of this sounded familiar and terrible. I had been doing that for days and getting water in my nose for my pains.

"But when the student arrives," Miss Folgil went on, "you must not allow her to simply tow you away. You must struggle, just as hard as you can. You must try to clutch her by the head; you must try to twine your legs about her and otherwise hamper her in trying to save you."

Now, *this* sounded something like. I was foolishly fired by the attractive thought of getting back at some of the fiends who had been ducking me in the name of science for the past two weeks. Unfortunately, I hadn't studied Chapter 9, entitled "How to Break Holds the Drowning Swimmer Uses." Worse, I hadn't heard Miss Folgil's lecture on "Be Firm with the Panic-Stricken Swimmer — Better a Few Bruises Than a Watery Grave." This last was Miss Folgil's own opinion, of course.

So I swam out to my doom, happy as a lark. Maybelle Anne Pettijohn, a tall, lean girl who ordinarily wore horn-rimmed spectacles, was Miss Folgil's choice to rescue Exhibit A, the panic-stricken swimmer.

I laughed when I saw her coming. I thought I could clean up Maybelle Anne easily enough, but alas, I hadn't counted on Maybelle Anne's methodical approach to

life. She had read Chapter 9 in our textbook, and she had listened carefully to Miss Folgil's inspiring words. Besides, Maybelle Anne was just naturally the kind of girl who ran around doing people dirty for their own good. "This may hurt your feelings," she used to say mournfully, "but I feel I have to tell you . . ."

When Maybelle Anne got near me, I enthusiastically lunged for her neck and hung on with both hands while getting her around her waist with my legs. Maybelle Anne thereupon dug her fingernails into my hands with ferocious force, and I let go and swam away, hurt and surprised. This was distinctly not playing fair.

"What's the idea?" I called out.

"It says to do that in the book," Maybelle Anne replied, treading water.

"Well, you lay off of that stuff," I said, angered, book or no book. Maybelle Anne was a Girl Scout, too, and I was shocked to think she'd go around using her fingernails in a fair fight.

"Come on, struggle," Maybelle Anne said, getting winded from treading water. I swam over, pretty reluctant and much more wary. Believe it or not, this time Maybelle Anne, who was two medals from being a Beaver or whatever it is Girl Scouts with a lot of medals get to be, bit me.

In addition to biting me, Maybelle Anne swung her arm around my neck, with the intention of towing me in to the shore. But I still had plenty of fight left, and I had never been so mad in my life. I got Maybelle Anne un-

der water two or three times, and I almost thought I had her when suddenly, to my earnest surprise, she hauled off and hit me as hard as she could, right in the eye. Then she towed me in, triumphant as anything.

Maybelle Anne afterward claimed it was all in the book, and she wouldn't even apologize for my black eye. Eileen and I fixed her, though. We put a little garter snake in her bed and scared the daylights out of her. Maybelle Anne was easy to scare anyway, and really a very disagreeable girl. I used to hope that she would come to a bad end, which, from my point of view, at least, she did. Maybelle Anne grew up to be a Regional Red Cross Life-saving Examiner.

I'll bet she just loves her work.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### What Do You Think?

1. What is the meaning of the title?
2. What does the fact that their father will not leave his daughters at the lodge suggest about the McKenney sisters?
3. Why does the author say that the worst part about the rowboat disaster was that Eileen was considered a heroine?
4. Why is Ruth chosen as the guinea pig?
5. What unforeseen difficulty arises when she tries to undress under water?
6. Why is she happy at the thought of illustrating the chapter called "Struggling"? What unexpectedly spoils her fun?



7. Why does she so heartily dislike Miss Folgil, the teacher?
8. Do you think that now that she has grown up, Miss McKenney feels that the idea of teaching lifesaving is worthless?
9. Can you decide just why this story is so funny? (If you gave "No" as the answer to question 8, you are on the way to discovering the answer to this question.)

### *If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. Other characters in this story might have told a very different account. Tell the story as you imagine one of them might have told it, for example:  
Miss Folgil tells one of the other camp councilors the story of one of the lifesaving lessons.  
Maybelle Anne writes her mother a letter telling of her rescue of Ruth.
2. Though "Guinea Pig" is a true story, note how it has a definite plan, just as the other stories in this book have.
  - a. The introductory incident — the rowboat disaster
  - b. The beginning of the main story — the first lessons at camp
  - c. The building up of story — the more exciting account of undressing under water
  - d. The most exciting incident of all — the lesson in "Struggling"

In telling a story about one of your experiences, try to follow a similar plan. As your story will be shorter than this one, you will probably want to omit an introduction or write only a very short one. But save your most exciting incident for the end, and lead up to it through less exciting incidents. Some of these topics may suggest stories to you.

- a. Learning to Paddle a Canoe
- ~~b. Lost in the Woods~~
- c. The Picnic Where Everything Went Wrong

- d. Trials with My New Christmas Skates
- e. My Older Brother's (or Sister's) First Attempts to Drive the Family Car

*If You Want to Read*

Other stories that you may enjoy about girls and boys that get into — and sometimes out of — scrapes are:

*Helen's Babies*, John Habberton

*Story of a Bad Boy*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain

*Penrod*, *Penrod and Sam*, and *Seventeen*, Booth Tarkington

*Bealby*, H. G. Wells

"Hun-gah," "No Tears, No Good," "A Loud Sneer for Our Feathered Friends," from *My Sister Eileen*, Ruth McKenney

# THE MILK PITCHER

by Howard Brubaker

MOST American boys are interested in baseball. And most American girls with brothers or other boys about the house catch some of their enthusiasm. Almost any story about baseball is lively, but this story adds to an exciting account of this popular game a humorous southpaw who has a cow for his best friend!

YOU may have read the column of humorous comment that Howard Brubaker writes for each issue of the weekly magazine, *The New Yorker*. Perhaps you have chuckled over this or over his stories of Randolph Dukes — Ranny, for short — a boy who gets into and out of scrapes with something of the ease of Booth Tarkington's Penrod.

Like Mr. Tarkington, Mr. Brubaker was born in Indiana. After graduation from the State University, he came to New York City. Before joining the staff of *The New Yorker*, he held various positions: he served as financial secretary for the University Settlement Society, as assistant in the Bureau of Municipal Research, and as associate editor of the magazines, *Success* and *Collier's Weekly*.

## THE MILK PITCHER

THE Fullers named their son "Philip" after his maternal grandfather. That was an error in judgment because the time came when the name Phil Fuller aroused chuckles and snickers among the pleasure-loving faces of the countryside. At the age of one Phil had practically settled upon red as the best color for hair. Some time in his third year the truth was established that he was left-handed. When given something he did not want, he threw it away with violence.

This act seemed to set up pleasurable emotions in his young soul. His simple face widened into a grin, and before long he was heaving things around for the sheer love of heaving.

At four Phil sprouted a genuine freckle on his nose, the forerunner of a bumper crop, and even his prejudiced mother had to admit that his ears were large for their age.

The youth spent his fourth summer in the society of a Jersey calf named Lily, who was tethered in the orchard. Phil had nothing to do except to throw green apples at a tree with his left hand, and Lily's time was also her own. The child learned not to wince when she licked his pink nose with her rough tongue, and the calf put up with some pretty rowdy conduct too. Both infants cried when separated for the night. The tender attachment between Phil and Lil was the subject of neigh-

borhood gossip as far away as the Doug Morton place at the bend of Squaw Creek.

When Phil was six he threw a carriage bolt from the wagon shed into the water trough, and he laughed so boisterously over this feat that Mr. Harrington heard the noise while passing in a light spring wagon.

Phil had a misguided sense of humor. It seemed to him that throwing things was the world's funniest joke. As he picked up a stone and let it fly, the freckles on his face arranged themselves into a pleasure pattern, his features widened, and he grinned expansively, showing vacant spots where he was changing teeth.

By this time his love for the cow stable had become a grand passion. Horses, dogs, cats, and pigs meant rather less in his young life than they do to most farm boys, but cows meant more. Phil attended all the milkings with his father, dealt out bran, and threw down hay. He wandered in and out among bovine legs without fear; hoofs, horns, and teeth had no terrors for him. He was soon old enough to drive the cattle to pasture and bring them back.

At the age of eight he was probably the ablest red-headed cowboy and left-handed stone-thrower in Clinton Township. At this date in history he had drunk enough milk to float a battleship and thrown enough stones, sticks, bones, horseshoes, apples, corncobs, and baseballs to sink one. He was now the owner in fee simple of Lily's knock-kneed daughter, Dolly. This white-faced blond

flapper followed Phil around with adoration and bleated at the barnyard gate until her playmate came home from school.

That fount of knowledge was Clinton Township, District No. 5, known locally as Tamarack School. There he absorbed a reasonable quantity of booklore and learned to pitch a straight ball with speed and control. He is still remembered in educational circles as the southpaw who hurled the Tamarackers to glorious victory over the Squaw Creek outfit, while unveiling the broadest grin ever seen on the lot and issuing many unnecessary noises. Although he had a lot of influence over a baseball, he could not make his face behave.

Baseball was the great joy of Phil's school years. Every spring when the frost came out of the ground his flaming head sprang up on the soggy field like a tulip. He had never learned to bat well, but he was a thrower of great ability and a laughter and yellor of great audibility. In school when asked to give the boundaries of Baluchistan he could scarcely make the teacher hear, but on the diamond his disorderly conduct was noted and deplored as far away as Grandma Longenecker's cottage.

The game uncorked his inhibitions and released his ego. His habitual shyness vanished and gave place to vociferous glee. He did frolicsome things with his feet; his arms went round like a windmill wheel; sometimes he burst into what he wrongly believed to be song. Miss Willikans, the teacher, testified that Phil had easily the

worst singing voice that had attended District Number 5 in her time — which would be nineteen years if she lived through this term, as seemed highly unlikely.

Inevitably there came an afternoon in late May when Phil's career as a Tamaracker had run its course. He twisted a button almost off his new coat, whispered a graduating piece about Daniel Webster, took his books and his well-worn right-hand glove, and went back to the cows.

At five o'clock the following morning the fourteen-year-old Phil became the vice-president and general manager of the dairy department of the Fuller farm. His father was overworked; help was scarce and expensive; and the graduate of Tamarack was judged strong enough to handle the job. He milked all the cows that summer, cleaned the stalls, helped to get in the hay and fill the silo. He ran the separator, he churned, he carried skim milk to the pigs. The end of the summer found him a stocky lad of rather less than normal height but with a rank growth of feet, arms, and ears. He had the complexion of a boiled beet and hair exactly the shade of a two-cent stamp. His hands were large and fully equipped with freckles, calluses, bumps, cracks, warts, knuckles, and rough, red wrists.

Phil could lift with one hand Dolly's new calf, Molly; he could throw a ten-pound sledge hammer over the hay barn; he could sing like a creaky pump; and he shattered all known speed records from the stable to the dining-room. He was an able performer with the table fork as well as with the pitchfork.



In September he took all these assets and liabilities and his first long pants and went to Branford to live with Aunt Mary and Uncle Phineas and attend high school. As he was winding up his affairs preparatory to this great adventure, it was clear that he had something on his mind. It came out one night at supper in the hiatus between the fifth and sixth ears of Golden Bantam.

"It's too bad they don't keep a cow," he said, apropos of nothing.

"Oh, sakes alive, child!" Mother exclaimed in surprise. "They wouldn't want to be bothered with a cow."

Phil's ears went red. He polished off his corn cob and returned to the attack. "They wouldn't need to be bothered much. They have no horse any more and there's room in the barn. I could feed her and milk her and everything. I bet Aunt Mary would be glad to have lots of nice milk and cream. We could tie her behind the buggy and take her in with us."

"Tie who — Aunt Mary?" asked father with ill-timed facetiousness.

"Dolly," said Phil.

A dozen objections were raised and disposed of. Aunt Mary and Uncle Phineas were consulted by telephone, and after the first shock they agreed to the outrageous plan. And thus it came about that Phil Fuller was the first case in recorded history of a boy who went to Branford High School accompanied by a private and personal cow.

During those first months of strangeness and homesickness, Dolly was his comfort and his joy, his link with

the familiar. He brushed and polished that blond cow until her upholstery was threadbare, pampered her with choice viands and clean bedding, scrubbed and white-washed the interior of the old barn, put in window sashes to give Dolly more sunlight and a better view. Often when the day was fair he led her around the block to take the air and see a little city life.

At six o'clock of a dark, bitter morning the neighbors could hear distressing noises issuing from Phineas Rucker's lantern-lit barn, and they knew from sad experiences of the past that another day was about to dawn and the redheaded Fuller boy was singing to his heart's true love.

Dolly was now in the full flush of her splendid young cowhood, and home was never like this. Phil plied her with experimental mixtures — beet pulp, ground oats, cottonseed meal — and carefully noted the results. The contented cow responded gratefully to this treatment. Before long she exceeded the needs of the Rucker family, and Phil was doing a pleasant little milk business with the neighbors. His immaculate barn, his new white overalls, his vocal excesses, and his free street parades all helped trade. The milk inspector passed Dolly with high honors, and doctors recommended her for ailing babies. Presently she was one of Branford's leading citizens, a self-supporting twenty-quart cow commanding a premium of three cents over the market price. Phil had discovered his lifework.

His second great discovery did not come until spring. On a blustery March day he was out on the diamond be-

hind the high-school building warming up his left wing and chuckling over his favorite joke when Mr. Huckley, chemistry teacher and baseball coach, came along.

"Southpaw, eh!" he demanded. "Let's see what you've got, Fuller."

Phil gave a brief exhibition of his wares with Dinky Doolittle holding the catcher's glove.

"Plenty of steam and good control," the teacher said, "and your footwork is terrible. Now show us your curve."

"I haven't got any," Phil answered. "Nobody ever showed me how to pitch a curve."

"Somebody will now," Mr. Huckley said. "Whether you can do it or not is another question."

That was the beginning of a beautiful friendship and a new era in the life of Philip Fuller.

Mr. Huckley had pitched on the team of Athens University, of which he was a graduate. He liked Phil, admired his able hands, his abnormally developed forearms, his keen joy in the game. The coach saw great possibilities in this piece of raw material, and he spent a patient hour teaching Phil some of the rudiments of curve pitching, and in time they achieved a perceptible out curve. At the height of his exultation, the boy pulled out a nickel-plated watch and said:

"I ask you to excuse me now. It's time to milk my cow."

After a week of such instruction, Mr. Huckley handed down this decision: "You have the makings of a good

pitcher, Phil, if you're willing to learn. You have a couple of fine qualities and not over twenty-five or thirty serious faults."

Phil's ears flushed with pleasure and embarrassment.

"Well, maybe I can get shut of some of them — I mean those — faults. I've got four years to do it in."

"Right-o. You have good control of your fast one; you have a nice little out; and you have the worst style of windup these eyes have ever seen."

Four years of study, dairying, and baseball, with summers of hard work on the farm made Phil a different boy — different and yet curiously the same. His shoulders were broader, his arms stronger, but he did not add many inches to his stature. He knew more mathematics, science, and history, but Latin was still Greek to him. Although he took on some of the manners and customs of his town contemporaries, he still had the gait of one walking over a plowed field. In time he learned to talk with girls without being distressed, but as a social light he was a flickering flame in a smoky chimney. He was a conspicuous success on the barn floor but a brilliant failure on the dance floor. His voice changed, but not for the better. His matin song to Dolly now sounded like a bullfrog with a bad attack of static. He wrote a creditable little rural farce for the senior dramatic class and further distinguished himself as the worst actor on the American stage.

Though much ridiculed, he was universally liked and genuinely respected. On the ball field he was a source of

low comedy to friend and foe because of the eccentric behavior of his face and feet, but in his succeeding seasons on the mound he pitched the Branford High School out of the cellar position into respectable company, into select society, and finally, in his senior year, into the state championship of the small-town division.

At the joyfest in the assembly hall in celebration of this final triumph, Phil was forced to make a speech. He fixed his eyes upon his third vest button and informed it in confidence that it was Mr. Huckley who had made him what he was today — which wasn't so very much.

When his turn came, the chemist and coach arose and told the world a great secret about this Phil Fuller who had now pitched his last game for dear old B. H. S. Phil, he said, owed his success as a pitcher to his having been brought up in a cow barn. Constant milking had developed his forearm muscles to surprising strength, and the knots and knobs on his good left hand had enabled him to get a spin on the ball that produced his deadliest curves.

"I therefore propose," he said, "that Phil's girl friend, Dolly, be elected an honorary member of the team."

This motion was seconded with a will and carried with a whoop, and Dolly became, as far as anyone could learn, the only cow that ever belonged to a ball club.

"Phil has told you," Mr. Huckley went on, "that he got some help from my coaching. If so, he has chosen a rotten way to pay his debt. Instead of going to a high-class and fancy culture factory like Athens, he has decided

to enter Sparta Agricultural College. Athens and Sparta are deadly enemies in athletics, and some day Phil may use what I have taught him against my own alma mater. There is no use trying to keep Phil from running after the cows, but this is a sad blow to me. I didn't raise my boy to be a Spartan."

It was the county agricultural agent who had first put Sparta into Phil's head. The boy had naturally assumed that his education would cease with high school, but this Mr. Runkleman came into Dolly's palatial quarters one day and spoke an eloquent piece in favor of his own Sparta.

"A boy who intends to be an expert dairy farmer," he said in part, "ought to learn all there is on the subject. You have a natural gift for taking care of cows, but what you don't know about scientific dairying would fill a ten-foot shelf."

"That's so," Phil answered, "but I haven't got much money."

"You don't need much money. Lots of the boys are working their way through. I'll guarantee that you get a job in the college dairy barn. The work will pay your board, teach you the practical side, and you'll meet the nicest cows in the world."

This was a weighty inducement, and one crisp day in late September found Phil knocking at the door of the higher education. He was a youth of five feet five with fiery hair and complexion, with ears that stuck out like red semaphores: a homely, awkward, likable boy, full of hope,

inexperience, diffidence, and whole raw milk. His only regret was that he could not take Dolly with him to college.

Because of Mr. Runkleman's hearty recommendation, he got his job in the dairy barn, and he took a room in a house near by. His days sped by in a new kind of eternal triangle — boardinghouse, dairy, and classroom — and he was happy in all three places.

Every morning at the ghastly hour of four he trudged through windy blackness to the big concrete barn. Now followed several hours of milking, feeding, currying, and stable-cleaning in company with half a dozen other cow students, then home to breakfast and to class. In the late afternoon there was a repetition of these chores, followed by dinner, some study, and an early bed. Such was the wild college life of this flaming youth.

Football, the great autumn obsession, meant little to him. Basketball was more fun, but a habitual early riser makes a poor customer of night life. In fact, Phil made up his mind that, for the first year, he would waste no time on athletics.

Sibyl Barnett Samboy, the wife of Kenneth Samboy, director of Sparta athletics, said after Phil had been introduced to her at the freshman reception: "That's the first time I ever shook hands with a Stillson wrench."

Although he honestly intended to keep out of baseball, the first warm afternoon in March brought on an attack of the old spring fever. There was no harm, he thought, in getting out a ball and glove and tossing a few

to "Spider" Coppery behind the barn while waiting for milking-time. Before long it was a regular practice among the "cowboys" to beguile their idle moments with playing catch and knocking up flies, and presently there was talk of forming a team to play a game with the students of the horticultural department, otherwise the "greenhouse gang."

An insulting challenge was given and taken, and the game took place on a pleasant Saturday.

This contest was held upon the old ball grounds. The new stadium was built upon a better site, and the former athletic grounds with their little grandstand were given over to the general use of the students. Samboy was a firm believer in athletics for everybody. He loved to stir up little wars between classes, dormitories, fraternities, and departments. Often these little home-brew contests developed and uncovered talent for the college teams.

Along about the fifth inning of this ragged ball game an uninvited guest appeared among the handful of spectators in the grandstand. Phil was on the mound at the time.

So Mr. Samboy's eyes were gladdened by the sight of a stocky, freckled, redheaded southpaw who burned them over with power, who laughed from head to foot and uttered unfortunate noises.

Samboy talked with him after the game, poked his nose into his past, and urged him to try for the college team.



Phil protested that he was too busy with his classes and his cows. It was a long argument, but Samboy won.

"Report to Donnigan on Monday," said the director, "and tell him I suggested that he look you over. Every coach has a free hand with his own team, you know, but if he turns you down let me know, and I'll give you a try-out on the freshman team. I'll speak to Professor Weatherby, if you like, and ask him to let you shift hours at the dairy while you're trying your luck on the diamond."

"You don't suppose" — Phil was visibly embarrassed — "there wouldn't be any danger of me losing that job — or anything? I wouldn't do that for all the baseball there is."

"Not a chance, Fuller. We don't give fellows positions here because they are good athletes, but we don't fire 'em either."

H. B. Donnigan — "Hardboiled Donnigan" — had learned his trade under the great Tim Crowley of the Eagles. Donnigan's big-league days were over, and he was making a living coaching college teams. He used the Crowley method and the Crowley philosophy. All ballplayers were worms and should be treated as such.

He had spent his boyhood among the tin cans and bottles of a vacant lot in New York's gashouse district, and he never really believed that ballplayers could be grown in the country.

One trouble with his policy was that it did not work at all. It was rumored that when his contract expired at the

end of the season Samboy would let him go. A sense of his failure did not improve the coach's technique — or his temper. It was to this man-eating tiger that Samboy had cheerfully thrown the redheaded rookie from the cow barn.

"And now who let you in?" was Hardboiled Donnigan's address of welcome.

"Mr. Samboy said would you please look me over."

The phrase was perhaps an unfortunate one. The coach did exactly that.

"All right. Tell him I've done it, and if you're Lillian Gish I'm Queen Marie."

"I'm a pitcher — southpaw." Phil's hard-earned grammar fled in this crisis. "I done good in high school."

"Oh, all right, stick around," said the testy coach. "When I get time, I'll see if you've got anything."

He seemed to forget all about Phil — who had not the slightest objection. The boy had a bad case of stage fright, partly from Donnigan's ill-nature, but more from the immensity of the empty stadium. He had almost made up his mind to sneak back to his beloved cows when he realized that he was being addressed.

"Hey, you — carrots — come out to the box and pitch to the batters." Donnigan took his place behind the plate. "Murder this guy," he muttered to Risler, a senior and the captain of the team.

Risler murdered, instead, the bright April sunshine in three brutal blows. The old miracle had happened again. The moment Phil took hold of the ball and faced the

batter he forgot his fears; he remembered only that throwing a baseball was the greatest fun in the world.

"Hey, wipe that grin off your map," yelled the coach. "What do you think this is, a comic opy?"

Phil controlled his features with an effort while two more batters showed their futility. Donnigan handed his catcher's glove to "Swede" Olson.

"Gimme that stick," he growled. "You birds belong in a home for the blind!"

There were two serious mistakes that Phil could make in this crisis, and he made them both without delay. He struck out Hardboiled Donnigan, and he laughed. Of course he knew better than to ridicule the coach, but there was something irresistible about the way Donnigan lunged for that last slow floater.

"All right, now you've done your stuff, get out!" yelled the offended professional. "And stay out. I can't monkey with a guy who won't take his work serious. Laugh that off."

A few snickers were thrown after the defeated candidate, but the players knew that Donnigan had committed a manager's unpardonable sin of turning down a promising recruit on a personal grudge — and he knew that they knew.

As for Phil, he left the stadium with genuine relief. The more he saw of Donnigan, the better he liked cows. He had kept his promise to Samboy; now he would just sink out of sight and stick to business.

In reply to an inquiry, Samboy got a letter from Mr.

Huckley stating that, in the opinion of an old Athens pitcher, Phil Fuller was the best that Branford High School had ever produced. The director showed this tribute to Donnigan.

"Oh, that's the sorrel-top. He hasn't got anything but a giggle."

"Are you sure, Hank? We could use a good south-paw."

"I know, but he ain't the answer. This Athens bird is trying to frame us."

"I'll wish him on the freshmen then."

"Sure—give the kid a chanst, Ken," said Donnigan with affected good will. "He might show something if he ever gets over the idea it's all a big wheeze."

Phil was heartily welcomed into the freshman squad. In the presence of Samboy he performed ably in a practice game. His fast ball, well-controlled curve, and change of pace made the inexperienced batters helpless; and his strange conduct landed him in the public eye with a bang.

The college comic paper, *The Cutup*, had a fine time over Phil. It discovered that the eccentric left-hander was a cow-barner, and it almost died of laughter at this joke.

"Phil Fuller, the Milk Pitcher," was the title of the piece. He was one of the wide-open faces from the wide-open spaces, the wit said, and sure winner of the standing broad grin. Also he proved the truth of the old saying, "Little pitchers have big ears."

But the result of the publicity was that the crowd at

the freshman-sophomore game was the largest of the season. Among those present were old President Whitman, Professor Wetherby, and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Samboy.

The assembled underclassmen laughed until they ached at the grinning, gesticulating, noisy southpaw with the red-thatched roof. They greeted his queer, awkward windup with a yell invented by the sophomore cheerleader, a long, rhythmic "So — o — o, boss." But when he had won the game handily for the freshmen, the jeers turned to cheers.

Sibyl Samboy looked at her husband.

"And why," she asked, "is this infant phenomenon not on the varsity?"

"Hank can't see him somehow, and if I butt in, it upsets my whole system of government. Personally I'd pitch him in a game or two to season him and then try him on Athens. But it isn't worth a rumpus, Sib. After all, Fuller will be with us a long time yet, and Donnigan won't."

"Poor old Hank! I wonder what he's got against the boy."

"It's incompatibility of temperament, I guess. Hank thinks baseball is cosmic and Phil thinks it's comic."

"And you," said Sibyl, "think you're a wisecracker on 'The Cutup.'"

In the next issue of that little weekly there was a marked difference in tone. The frosh cowboy, it said, was showing ability as well as risibility. It was time Donnigan tried him out on the team.

There was something inevitable about the Phil Fuller movement. Donnigan did not want him on the team, Samboy was committed to keep his hands off, and Phil himself had no craving to appear in that big stadium. But the team was limping through a disastrous season, and there were signs of disaffection among the players. The crowds dwindled; finances were suffering; and the all-important Athens game, the schedule's climax, was approaching like the day of doom.

Donnigan resisted as long as he could, but, schooled as he was in the professional game, he recognized one power greater than players, managers or owners — the customer. And when white-haired Doctor Whitman called him into the president's office and intimated ever so gently that it might be just as well to give the public what it wanted, he gave in.

He did not surrender, but he retreated inch by inch. He gave Phil a uniform and let him practice with the team and learn the signals, then put him in at the end of a game that was already hopelessly lost. On the eve of the Athens contest he announced that he would pitch Hagenlaucher with Graybar and Fuller in reserve.

Any contest with the traditional foe always brought out the largest crowd of the season, but this year there was a novelty in the situation. The freshmen were out in full force prepared to make an organized nuisance of themselves on behalf of their favorite character. When he appeared on the field for practice they gave him a tremendous ovation.

Just before the game started, Phil realized that somebody was calling to him from the edge of the stand. To his great delight, this proved to be Mr. Huckley, who had traveled all the way from Branford to see the game.

"Phil," he said, "if you get a chance today, I want you to do your darnedest."

"I'd kinda hate to play against Athens after all you did for me."

"I know. That's why I spoke. Forget all that, Phil. If they put you in, pitch as you did last year against Milltown, Three Falls, Odenro, and Jefferson. Good luck!"

"Thank you, Mr. Huckley. I'll meet you right here after it's over. I've got something to tell you."

As he took his seat on the bench his smile faded and he lapsed into gloom. "He's scared stiff," thought Donigan. "I won't dare to stick him in if Haggy blows."

But Hagenlaucher was not blowing up; he was pitching his best game of the season. The Athens moundsman was doing well, too, and there was promise of a tight pitchers' battle. But in time the game grew looser, the pitchers faltered, Haggy was getting wabbly.

The score stood 6 to 5 in favor of the visitors in the fifth when the umpire made the momentous announcement, "Greenwich batting for Hagenlaucher." At the same moment Graybar and Fuller left for the bullpen to warm up. The next inning would see a new face in the box.

Whose face? That was what all Sparta wanted to

know; that was what Samboy wanted to know as he stepped out of the stand and walked up to Donnigan.

"Graybar," said the coach. "Fuller is scared to death. I guess he's got a yellow streak."

Samboy hesitated. The teams were changing sides now, and the embattled freshmen were booming in unison, like a base drum: "Phil! Phil! Phil!"

"All right, you're the doctor, Hank. But I'll go and talk to the boy."

The new pitcher did his best, but he was a broken reed. A base on balls, a single, and a hit batter filled the bags with nobody out, and the air was full of disaster. Captain Risler stepped to the box as if to steady the wobbly pitcher; Swede Olson, the catcher, joined this conference, which was further enriched by the presence of the lanky first baseman, Keeler.

Now Graybar handed the ball to Risler, who made a sign toward the bench. There was an instant of suspense, and then out of the dugout appeared the gaudy head of Phil Fuller.

An avalanche of sound slid down upon the field. From the freshman bloc came the long, rhythmic yell, "So — o — o, boss." In the general confusion, Hard-boiled Donnigan was scarcely seen emerging from the dugout. He seemed to shrink before the wave of noise; then he disappeared through an opening out of the field and out of the athletics department of Sparta.

Scarcely anyone in the audience knew that Donnigan had not ordered the change of pitchers, nor had Samboy.



It was Risler, backed by Olson, Keeler, and the whole team. It was mutiny; it was rebellion.

But this was not the familiar Phil Fuller who had laughed and danced his way into the hearts of the fans. This was a serious Phil, a gloomy Phil. Life was now real; life was earnest. He took his long queer windup, and he threw the ball high, far too high. Olson made a jump for the ball, missed it, and landed in a heap. Before he could recover the ball two runs had come over, and Athens rocked with laughter.

But so, to the amazement of the universe, did Phil Fuller. It suddenly seemed to the misguided youth that it was the funniest thing in the world that he should have thrown away the ball and let in two runs. The infield laughed in imitation. Philip was himself again.

Now the tension under which the team had been working suddenly relaxed as if a tight band had snapped and brought relief. The nervous, eager, do-or-die spirit suddenly disappeared, leaving the natural instinct of youth to have a good time. With the utmost ease the pitcher and the infield disposed of the next three batters, and in their half of the inning they began their climb toward victory.

It was a strange, exciting, hilarious game. Phil had never played in such fast company before or faced such a murderous array of bats. He was in hot water half a dozen times, but he never lost the healing gift of laughter.

And the team played as if baseball came under the head of pleasure.

Samboy said to Risler, who sat beside him on the bench in the eighth:

"Whether we win or lose, this is the answer. We're going to build a new idea and a new style of play around that southpaw. You watch our smoke for the next three years, Rissy."

"Just my luck, Ken. In about fifteen minutes I'm through with college baseball forever."

"Well, don't you ever regret what you did today. I can't officially approve it, but — there goes Phil fanning again."

Samboy now addressed the departing warriors.

"All right, boys — last frame and two to the good. All you have to do is hold 'em."

Now it appeared that Phil had been saving the finest joke of all for the end. The season was over, and he could take liberties with his arm. He dug his warts and bumps and calluses into the horsehide and proceeded to retire the side with three straight strike-outs, nine rowdy laughs, two informal dances, and an incredible noise that was a hideous parody on song.

But it was an altered and sobered Phil who found his old coach after the game and received his fervent congratulations.

"Were you worried, Phil?" Mr. Huckley asked.

"Yes, but I was glad they let me play. I had so much fun I forgot my trouble."

"What trouble, Phil?"

"Well, I got a letter from father this morning, and my

Dolly is terribly sick. Seems she got hold of an old paint can some place. Cows like to lick paint, you know, and it's deadly poison. They don't think Dolly will live. Maybe I left a can of paint somewhere myself. That's what bothers me."

"Listen, Phil. I was supposed to tell you, but you got away too quick. Your father telephoned me this morning. Dolly's out of danger. She's doing fine."

"Oh, boy!" cried Phil and his eyes shone with tears.

Down in the field the Sparta students, led by the band, were circling the stadium in that parade of victory which must follow every triumph over Athens.

"There'll be plenty more ball games," said Phil, "but there'll never be another cow like Dolly."

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. What did you find to laugh at in the account of Phil's upbringing and education before he goes to high school?
2. We are told that at high school Phil, though much ridiculed, is universally liked and genuinely respected. How do you account for the way his classmates feel toward him?
3. What argument persuades Phil to go to Sparta Agricultural College?
4. Why is he downcast on the day of the big game with Athens? Why does he hesitate to do his best to beat Athens?
5. How does the college paper really help Phil by poking fun at him?

6. How do you think Phil feels when he reads the articles about himself in the college paper?
7. What does Mr. Samboy mean when he tells Captain Rister, "We're going to build a new idea and a new style of play around that southpaw"?
8. What, for Phil, is the happy ending of the day of the big game with Athens?
9. Do you think Phil would be popular in your school? Why or why not?

*If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. Are there any girls in your class that do not understand baseball? If there are, you might help them to enjoy "The Milk Pitcher" by copying radio quiz programs. Elect a committee of five experts, boys and girls who know the game. Let the girls who need help ask questions about baseball terms or rules or any other points about the game that they want to know. Then let the experts do their best to make all these points clear.
2. The Most Exciting Game I Ever Played
3. The Time When Our School Snatched Victory from Defeat
4. The Funniest Boy I Ever Knew

If you choose this last topic, try to make your readers like the boy even though they laugh at him, just as you cannot help liking Phil in the story. If you choose a boy that can be recognized, be careful not to hurt his feelings.

*If You Want to Read*

- "Cow Pasture Backfield," "Crooked Arm," and "Ice on the Horse Killer," Stephen Meader  
"Horseshoes," Ring Lardner  
"Mister Conley," Charles E. Van Loan  
"I'm a Fool," Sherwood Anderson  
"The Purity of the Turf," P. G. Wodehouse

## THE RIGHT PROMETHEAN FIRE

by George Madden Martin

DO you remember your first day at school? or the first time you got into trouble and had to stay after school? Did you ever enter a new school in the middle of the term or return to school after a sickness, so that you had a hard time trying to catch up with the rest of the class? Perhaps you remember the strange boy or girl who sat in the seat in front of you and who later became your dearest friend. You could probably write an interesting story on almost any one of these memories. In "The Right Promethean Fire," see how well the author succeeds in creating for you a schoolroom of earlier days, a bewildered little girl, and a mischievous small boy.

GEORGE MADDEN MARTIN, in spite of the name George, is a woman. In the South, girls are sometimes given names we think of as boys' names. George Madden, who afterward became Mrs. Attwood R. Martin, was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1866. After her marriage, while she was recovering from an illness, she wrote a short story to help pass the time. Somewhat to her surprise, it was published, and she received \$75 for it. With this happy result as an encouragement, she began a series of stories about a little girl named Emmy Lou. From this book, entitled *Emmy Lou, Her Book and Heart*, is taken the story of "The Right Promethean Fire." Emmy Lou's career through school is told so simply and pleasantly that the book became widely popular. Besides describing so well the growth of Emmy Lou, the book also gives a picture of the way children were taught in schools of an earlier day than yours. It was even used at Harvard University to show a class of teachers the error of some of the older ways of teaching.

## THE RIGHT PROMETHEAN FIRE

EMMY LOU, laboriously copying digits, looked up. The boy sitting in line in the next row of desks was making signs to her.

She had noticed the little boy before. He was a square little boy, with a sprinkling of freckles over the bridge of the nose and a cheerful breadth of nostril. His teeth were wide apart, and his smile was broad and constant. Not that Emmy Lou could have told all this. She only knew that to her the knowledge of the little boy concerning the things peculiar to the Primer World seemed limitless.

And now the little boy was beckoning Emmy Lou. She did not know him, but neither did she know any of the seventy other little boys and girls making the Primer Class.

Because of a popular prejudice against whooping cough, Emmy Lou had not entered the Primer Class until late. When she arrived, the seventy little boys and girls were well along in Alphabetical lore, having long since passed the a, b, c, of initiation, and become glibly eloquent to a point where the l, m, n, o, p slipped off their tongues with the liquid ease of repetition and familiarity.

"But Emmy Lou can catch up," said Emmy Lou's Aunt Cordelia, a plump and cheery lady, beaming with optimistic placidity upon the infant populace seated in parallel rows at desks before her.

Miss Clara, the teacher, lacked Aunt Cordelia's op-

timism, also her plumpness. "No doubt she can," agreed Miss Clara, politely, but without enthusiasm. Miss Clara had stepped from the graduating rostrum to the school-room platform, and she had been there some years. And when one has been there some years and is already battling with seventy little boys and girls, one cannot greet the advent of a seventy-first with acclaim. Even the fact that one's hair is red is not an always sure indication that one's temperament is sanguine also.

So in answer to Aunt Cordelia, Miss Clara replied politely but without enthusiasm, "No doubt she can."

Then Aunt Cordelia went, and Miss Clara gave Emmy Lou a desk. And Miss Clara then rapping sharply and calling some small delinquent to order, Emmy Lou's heart sank within her.

Now Miss Clara's tones were tart because she did not know what to do with this late-comer. In a class of seventy, spare time is not offering for the bringing up of the backward. The way of the Primer teacher was not made easy in a public school of twenty-five years ago.

So Miss Clara told the new pupil to copy digits.

Now what digits were, Emmy Lou had no idea, but being shown them on the blackboard, she copied them diligently. And as the time went on, Emmy Lou went on copying digits. And her one endeavor being to avoid the notice of Miss Clara, it happened the needs of Emmy Lou were frequently lost sight of in the more assertive claims of the seventy.

Emmy Lou was not catching up, and it was January.

But today was to be different. The little boy was



nodding and beckoning. So far the seventy had left Emmy Lou alone. As a general thing the herds crowd toward the leaders, and the laggard brings up the rear alone.

But today the little boy was beckoning. Emmy Lou looked up. Emmy Lou was pink-cheeked and chubby, and in her heart there was no guile. There was an ease and swagger about the little boy. And he always knew when to stand up, and what for. Emmy Lou more than once had failed to stand up, and Miss Clara's reminder had been sharp. It was when a bell rang one must stand up. But what for, Emmy Lou never knew, until after the others began to do it.

But the little boy always knew. Emmy Lou had heard him, too, out on the bench glibly tell Miss Clara about the mat, and a bat, and a black rat. Today he stood forth with confidence and told about a fat hen. Emmy Lou was glad to have the little boy beckon her.

And in her heart there was no guile. That the little boy should be holding out an end of a severed india-rubber band and inviting her to take it was no stranger than other things happening in the Primer World every day.

The very manner of the infant classification breathed mystery, the sheep from the goats, so to speak, the little girls all one side of the central aisle, the little boys all the other — and to overstep the line of demarcation a thing too dreadful to contemplate.

Many things were strange. That one must get up suddenly when a bell rang was strange.

And to copy digits until one's chubby fingers, tightly

gripping the pencil, ached and then to be expected to take a sponge and wash those digits off was strange.

And to be told crossly to sit down was bewildering, when in answer to c, a, t, one said "Pussy." And yet there was Pussy washing her face, on the chart, and Miss Clara's pointer pointing to her.

So when the little boy held out the rubber band across the aisle, Emmy Lou took the proffered end.

At this the little boy slid back into his desk holding to his end. At the critical moment of elongation the little boy let go. And the property of elasticity is to rebound.

Emmy Lou's heart stood still. Then it swelled. But in her filling eyes there was no suspicion, only hurt. And even while a tear splashed down and, falling upon the laboriously copied digits, wrought havoc, she smiled bravely across at the little boy. It would have made the little boy feel bad to know how it hurt. So Emmy Lou winked bravely and smiled.

Whereupon the little boy wheeled about suddenly and fell to copying digits furiously. Nor did he look Emmy Lou's way, only drove his pencil into his slate with a fervor that made Miss Clara rap sharply on her desk.

Emmy Lou wondered if the little boy was mad. One would think it had stung the little boy and not her. But since he was not looking, she felt free to let her little fist seek her mouth for comfort.

Nor did Emmy Lou dream that, across the aisle, remorse was eating into a little boy's soul. Or that along

with remorse there went the image of one Emmy Lou, defenseless, pink-cheeked, and smiling bravely.

The next morning Emmy Lou was early. She was always early. Since entering the Primer Class, breakfast had lost its savor to Emmy Lou in the terror of being late.

But this morning the little boy was there before her. Hitherto his tardy and clattering arrival had been a daily happening, provocative of accents sharp and energetic from Miss Clara.

But this morning he was at his desk copying from his Primer on to his slate. The easy, ostentatious way in which he glanced from slate to book was not lost upon Emmy Lou, who lost her place whenever her eyes left the rows of digits upon the blackboard.

Emmy Lou watched the performance. And the little boy's pencil drove with furious ease, and its path was marked with flourishes. Emmy Lou never dreamed that it was because she was watching that the little boy was moved to this brilliant exhibition. Presently reaching the end of his page, he looked up, carelessly, incidentally. It seemed to be borne to him that Emmy Lou was there; whereupon he nodded. Then, as if moved by sudden impulse, he dived into his desk, and after ostentatious search in, on, under it, brought forth a pencil, and held it up for Emmy Lou to see. Nor did she dream that it was for this the little boy had been there since before Uncle Michael had unlocked the Primer door.

Emmy Lou looked across at the pencil. It was a slate pencil. A fine, long, new slate pencil grandly encased

for half its length in gold paper. One bought them at the drugstore across from the school, and one paid for them the whole of five cents.

Just then a bell rang. Emmy Lou got up suddenly. But it was the bell for school to take up. So she sat down. She was glad Miss Clara was not yet in her place.

After the Primer Class had filed in, with panting and frosty entrance, the bell rang again. This time it was the right bell tapped by Miss Clara, now in her place. So again Emmy Lou got up suddenly and by following the little girl ahead learned that the bell meant, "Go out to the bench."

The Primer Class according to the degree of its infant precocity was divided in three sections. Emmy Lou belonged to the third section. It was the last section, and she was the last one in it though she had no idea what a section meant nor why she was in it.

Yesterday the third section had said, over and over, in chorus, "One and one are two, two and two are four," etc. — but today they said, "Two and one are three, two and two are four."

Emmy Lou wondered, four what? Which put her behind, so that when she began again they were saying, "Two and four are six." So now she knew. Four is six. But what is six? Emmy Lou did not know.

When she came back to her desk the pencil was there. The fine, new, long slate pencil encased in gold paper. And the little boy was gone. He belonged to the first section, and the first section was now on the bench.

Emmy Lou leaned across and put the pencil back on the little boy's desk.

Then she prepared herself to copy digits with her stump of a pencil. Emmy Lou's were always stumps. Her pencil had a way of rolling off her desk while she was gone, and one pencil makes many stumps. The little boy had generally helped her pick them up on her return. But strangely, from this time, her pencils rolled off no more.

But when Emmy Lou took up her slate there was a whole side filled with digits in soldierly rows across; so her heart grew light and free from the weight of digits, and she gave her time to the washing of her desk, a thing in which her soul reveled, and for which, patterning after her little girl neighbors, she kept within that desk a bottle of soapy water and rags of gray and unpleasant nature that never dried, because of their frequent using. When Emmy Lou first came to school, her cleaning paraphernalia consisted of a sponge secured by a string to her slate, which was the badge of the new and the unsophisticated comer. Emmy Lou had quickly learned that, and no one rejoiced in a fuller assortment of soap, bottle, and rags than she; nor did a sponge longer dangle from the frame of her slate.

On coming in from recess this same day, Emmy Lou found the pencil on her desk again, the beautiful new pencil in the gilded paper. She put it back.

But when she reached home, the pencil, the beautiful pencil that costs all of five cents, was in her companion

box along with her stumps and her sponge and her grimy little slate rags. And about the pencil was wrapped a piece of paper. It had the look of the margin of a Primer page. The paper bore marks. They were not digits.

Emmy Lou took the paper to Aunt Cordelia. They were at dinner.

"Can't you read it, Emmy Lou?" asked Aunt Katie, the prettiest aunty.

Emmy Lou shook her head.

"I'll spell the letters," said Aunt Louise, the youngest aunty.

But they did not help Emmy Lou one bit.

Aunt Cordelia looked troubled. "She doesn't seem to be catching up," she said.

"No," said Aunt Katie.

"No," agreed Aunt Louise.

"Nor — on," said Uncle Charlie, the brother of the aunts, lighting up his cigar to go downtown.

Aunt Cordelia spread the paper out. It bore the words:

"It is for you."

So Emmy Lou put the pencil away in the companion and tucked it about with the grimy slate rags that no harm might befall it. And the next day she took it out and used it. But first she looked over at the little boy. The little boy was busy. But when she looked up again, he was looking.

The little boy grew red, and wheeling suddenly, fell to copying digits furiously. And from that moment on the little boy was moved to strange behavior.

Three times before recess did he, boldly ignoring the preface of upraised hand, swagger up to Miss Clara's desk. And going and coming, the little boy's boots with copper toes and run-down heels marked with thumping emphasis upon the echoing boards his processional and recessional. And reaching his desk, the little boy slammed down his slate with clattering reverberations.

Emmy Lou watched him uneasily. She was miserable for him. She did not know that there are times when the emotions are more potent than the subtlest wines. Nor did she know that the male of some species is moved thus to exhibition of prowess, courage, defiance, for the impressing of the chosen female of the species.

Emmy Lou merely knew that she was miserable and that she trembled for the little boy.

Having clattered his slate until Miss Clara rapped sharply, the little boy rose and went swaggering on an excursion around the room to where sat the bucket and dipper. And on his return he came up the center aisle between the sheep and the goats.

Emmy Lou had no idea what happened. It took place behind her. But there was another little girl who did. A little girl who boasted curls, yellow curls in tiered rows about her head. A lachrymosal little girl, who affected great horror of the little boys.

And what Emmy Lou failed to see was this: the little boy, in passing, deftly lifted a cherished curl between finger and thumb and proceeded on his way.

The little girl did not fail the little boy. In the suddenness of the surprise she surprised even him by her outcry. Miss Clara jumped. Emmy Lou jumped. And the sixty-nine jumped. And, following this, the little girl lifted her voice in lachrymal lament.

Miss Clara sat erect. The Primer Class held its breath. It always held its breath when Miss Clara sat erect. Emmy Lou held tightly to her desk besides. She wondered what it was all about.

Then Miss Clara spoke. Her accents cut the silence.

"Billy Traver!"

Billy Traver stood forth. It was the little boy.

"Since you seem pleased to occupy yourself with the little girls, Billy, go to the pegs!"

Emmy Lou trembled. "Go to the pegs!" What unknown, inquisitorial terrors lay behind those dread, laconic words, Emmy Lou knew not.

She could only sit and watch the little boy turn and stump back down the aisle and around the room to where along the wall hung rows of feminine apparel.

Here he stopped and scanned the line. Then he paused before a hat. It was a round little hat with silky nap and a curling brim. It had rosettes to keep the ears warm and ribbon that tied beneath the chin. It was Emmy Lou's hat. Aunt Cordelia had cautioned her to care concerning it.



The little boy took it down. There seemed to be no doubt in his mind as to what Miss Clara meant. But then he had been in the Primer Class from the beginning.

Having taken the hat down he proceeded to put it upon his own shock head. His face wore its broad and constant smile. One would have said the little boy was enjoying the affair. As he put the hat on, the sixty-nine laughed. The seventieth did not. It was her hat, and besides, she did not understand.

Miss Clara still erect spoke again: "And now, since you are a little girl, get your book, Billy, and move over with the girls."

Nor did Emmy Lou understand why, when Billy, having gathered his belongings together, moved across the aisle and sat down with her, the sixty-nine laughed again. Emmy Lou did not laugh. She made room for Billy.

Nor did she understand when Billy treated her to a slow and surreptitious wink, his freckled countenance grinning beneath the rosetted hat. It never could have occurred to Emmy Lou that Billy had laid his cunning plans to this very end. Emmy Lou understood nothing of all this. She only pitied Billy. And presently, when public attention had become diverted, she proffered him the hospitality of a grimy little slate rag. When Billy returned the rag there was something in it — something wrapped in a beautiful, glazed, shining bronze paper. It was a candy kiss. One paid five cents for six of them at the drugstore.

On the road home, Emmy Lou ate the candy. The

beautiful, shiny paper she put in her Primer. The slip of paper that she found within she carried to Aunt Cordelia. It was sticky and it was smeared. But it had reading on it.

"But this is printing," said Aunt Cordelia; "can't you read it?"

Emmy Lou shook her head.

"Try," said Aunt Katie.

"The easy words," said Aunt Louise.

But Emmy Lou, remembering c-a-t, Pussy, shook her head.

Aunt Cordelia looked troubled. "She certainly isn't catching up," said Aunt Cordelia. Then she read from the slip of paper:

Oh, woman, woman, thou wert made  
The peace of Adam to invade.

The aunts laughed, but Emmy Lou put it away with the glazed paper in her Primer. It meant quite as much to her as did the reading in that Primer: Cat, a cat, the cat. The bat, the mat, a rat. It was the jingle to both that appealed to Emmy Lou.

About this time rumors began to reach Emmy Lou. She heard that it was February, and that wonderful things were peculiar to the Fourteenth. At recess the little girls locked arms and talked Valentines. The echoes reached Emmy Lou.

The valentine must come from a little boy, or it wasn't the real thing. And to get no valentine was a dreadful — dreadful thing. And even the timidest of the sheep began to cast eyes across at the goats.

Emmy Lou wondered if she would get a valentine. And if not, how was she to survive the contumely and shame?

You must never, never breathe to a living soul what was on your valentine. To tell even your best and truest little girl friend was to prove faithless to the little boy sending the valentine. These things reached Emmy Lou.

Not for the world would she tell. Emmy Lou was sure of that, so grateful did she feel she would be to anyone sending her a valentine.

And in doubt and wretchedness did she wend her way to school on the Fourteenth Day of February. The drug-store window was full of valentines. But Emmy Lou crossed the street. She did not want to see them. She knew the little girls would ask her if she had gotten a valentine. And she would have to say, No.

She was early. The big, empty room echoed back her footsteps as she went to her desk to lay down book and slate before taking off her wraps. Nor did Emmy Lou dream the eye of the little boy peeped through the crack of the door from Miss Clara's dressing room.

Emmy Lou's hat and jacket were forgotten. On her desk lay something square and white. It was an envelope. It was a beautiful envelope, all over flowers and scrolls.

Emmy Lou knew it. It was a valentine. Her cheeks grew pink.

She took it out. It was blue. And it was gold. And it had reading on it.

Emmy Lou's heart sank. She could not read the reading. The door opened. Some little girls came in. Emmy

Lou hid her valentine in her book, for since you must not — she would never show her valentine — never.

The little girls wanted to know if she had gotten a valentine, and Emmy Lou said, Yes, and her cheeks were pink with the joy of being able to say it.

Through the day she took peeps between the covers of her Primer, but no one else might see it.

It rested heavy on Emmy Lou's heart, however, that there was reading on it. She studied it surreptitiously. The reading was made up of letters. It was the first time Emmy Lou had thought about that. She knew some of the letters. She would ask someone the letters she did not know by pointing them out on the chart at recess. Emmy Lou was learning. It was the first time since she came to school.

But what did the letters make? She wondered, after recess, studying the valentine again.

Then she went home. She followed Aunt Cordelia about. Aunt Cordelia was busy.

"What does it read?" asked Emmy Lou.

Aunt Cordelia listened.

"B," said Emmy Lou, "and e?"

"Be," said Aunt Cordelia.

If B was Be, it was strange that B and e were Be. But many things were strange.

Emmy Lou accepted them all on faith.

After dinner she approached Aunt Katie.

"What does it read?" asked Emmy Lou, "m and y?"

"My," said Aunt Katie.

The rest was harder. She could not remember the letters and had to copy them off on her slate. Then she sought Tom, the houseboy. Tom was out at the gate talking to another houseboy. She waited until the other boy was gone.

"What does it read?" asked Emmy Lou, and she told the letters off the slate. It took Tom some time, but finally he told her.

Just then a little girl came along. She was a first-section little girl, and at school she never noticed Emmy Lou.

Now she was alone, so she stopped.

"Get any valentines?"

"Yes," said Emmy Lou. Then moved to confidence by the little girl's friendliness, she added, "It has reading on it."

"Pooh," said the little girl, "they all have that. My mamma's been reading the long verses inside to me."

"Can you show them — valentines?" asked Emmy Lou.

"Of course, to grown-up people," said the little girl.

The gas was lit when Emmy Lou came in. Uncle Charlie was there, and the aunties, sitting around, reading.

"I got a valentine," said Emmy Lou.

They all looked up. They had forgotten it was Valentine's Day, and it came to them that if Emmy Lou's mother had not gone away, never to come back, the year before, Valentine's Day would not have been forgotten.

Aunt Cordelia smoothed the black dress she was wearing because of the mother who would never come back, and looked troubled.

But Emmy Lou laid the blue and gold valentine on Aunt Cordelia's knee. In the valentine's center were two hands clasping. Emmy Lou's forefinger pointed to the words beneath the clasped hands.

"I can read it," said Emmy Lou.

They listened. Uncle Charlie put down his paper. Aunt Louise looked over Aunt Cordelia's shoulder.

"B," said Emmy Lou, "e — Be."

The aunties nodded.

"M," said Emmy Lou, "y — my."

Emmy Lou did not hesitate. "V," said Emmy Lou, "a, l, e, n, t, i, n, e — Valentine. Be my Valentine."

"There!" said Aunt Cordelia.

"Well!" said Aunt Katie.

"At last!" said Aunt Louise.

"H'm!" said Uncle Charlie.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. In what ways does Emmy Lou seem like a real little girl?
2. Why is she late in entering the Primer Class?
3. Why do Miss Clara and Emmy Lou's aunt feel differently about Emmy Lou's chances of catching up with the class?
4. What are the "digits" she copies over and over again?
5. Why does Emmy Lou admire Billy Traver?

6. What does she do that finally changes his feelings toward her?
7. Why does Emmy Lou learn so little at first?
8. What really starts her on the road to learning?
9. How far is Emmy Lou's school like the one where you began to go to school? How far is it like your present school?
10. Do you know what is meant by the title "The Right Promethean Fire"? If not, ask your teacher to tell you where you can find out the meaning.

#### *If You Want to Write*

Emmy Lou's experiences may make you remember experiences of your own when you were very young. Try to write an amusing story on one of the following topics:

1. My First Day at School
2. My First Lie
3. My First "Date"
4. My First Day at Junior High School
5. The First Time I Was Punished at School

#### *If You Want to Read*

Emmy Lou — *Her Book and Heart*, George Madden Martin

"The Angel Child," Stephen Crane

"The Madness of Philip" and "Ardelia in Arcady," Josephine Dodge Daskam Bacon

*Little Citizens* and *Little Aliens*, Myra Kelly

*Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, Lewis Carroll

Genevieve Gertrude, Mariel Brady

"The Rainy Day, the Good Mother, and the Brown Suit," Dorothy Canfield Fisher





## GOLD-MOUNTED GUNS

by F. R. Buckley

DO you like Western stories or movies of cowboys and desperadoes, of gunmen and clever detectives? At first, this very short story may seem just another "Western" to you, but as you read on you will find "Gold-mounted Guns" unusual. You will also find that the plot is given an unusual twist at the end. This story was awarded the O. Henry Memorial Prize, which is given annually to the best short story published within the year.

"GOLD-MOUNTED GUNS" is a product of F. R. Buckley's visit to America. He is a native of Ireland and was educated in England. Of course he could not have written a story so truly American in flavor as this one if he had been merely a tourist visiting the United States. Actually, he lived here for a number of years, working as a newspaperman and holding such widely varying jobs as day laborer, scenario-writer, and movie actor. Since his return to England, he has devoted himself to writing fiction: several novels, two books of short stories, and a series of fine adventure stories about a daring Italian captain named Luigi Caradoso.

## GOLD-MOUNTED GUNS

EVENING had fallen on Longhorn City, and already, to the south, an eager star was twinkling in the velvet sky, when a spare, hard-faced man slouched down the main street and selected a pony from the dozen hitched beside Tim Geogehan's general store. The town, which in the daytime suffered from an excess of eye-searing light in its open spaces, confined its efforts at artificial lighting to the one store, the one saloon, and its neighbor, the Temple of Chance; so it was from a dusky void that the hard-faced man heard himself called by name.

"Tommy!" a subdued voice accosted him.

The hard-faced man made, it seemed, a very slight movement—a mere flick of the hand at his low-slung belt; but it was a movement perfectly appraised by the man in the shadows.

"Wait a minute!" the voice pleaded.

A moment later, his hands upraised, his pony's bridle reins caught in the crook of one arm, a young man moved into the zone of light that shone bravely out through Tim Geogehan's back window.

"Don't shoot," he said, trying to control his nervousness before the weapon unwaveringly trained upon him. "I'm—a friend."

For perhaps fifteen seconds the newcomer and the hard-faced man examined each other with the unwinking scrutiny of those who take chances of life and death. The

younger, with that lightning draw fresh in his mind, noted the sinister droop of a gray mustache over a hidden mouth, and shivered a little as his gaze met that of a pair of steel-blue eyes. The man with the gun saw before him a rather handsome face, marred, even in this moment of submission, by a certain desperation.

"What do you want?" he asked, tersely.

"Can I put my hands down?" countered the other.

The lean man considered.

"All things bein' equal," he said, "I think I'd rather you'd first tell me how you got round to callin' me Tommy. Been askin' people in the street?"

"No," said the boy. "I only got into town this afternoon, an' I ain't a fool anyway. I seen you ride in this afternoon, and the way folks backed away from you made me wonder who you was. Then I seen them gold-mounted guns of yourn, an' of course I knew. Nobody ever had guns like them but Pecos Tommy. I could ha' shot you while you was gettin' your horse, if I'd been that way inclined."

The lean man bit his mustache.

"Put 'em down. What do you want?"

"I want to join you."

"You want to *what*?"

"Yeah, I know it sounds foolish to you, mebbe," said the young man. "But, listen — your sidekicker's in jail down in Rosewell. I figured I could take his place — anyway, till he got out. I know I ain't got any record, but I can ride, an' I can shoot the pips out of a ten-spot at ten

paces, an' — I got a little job to bring into the firm, to start with."

The lean man's gaze narrowed.

"Have, eh?" he asked, softly.

"It ain't anythin' like you go in for as a rule," said the boy, apologetically, "but it's a roll of cash an' — I guess it'll show you I'm straight. I only got onto it this afternoon. Kind of providential I should meet you right now."

The lean man chewed his mustache. His eyes did not shift.

"Yeah," he said, slowly. "What you quittin' punchin' for?"

"Sick of it."

"Figurin' robbin' trains is easier money?"

"No," said the young man, "I ain't. But I like a little spice in life. They ain't none in punchin'."

"Got a girl?" asked the lean man.

The boy shook his head. The hard-faced man nodded reflectively.

"Well, what's the job?" he asked.

The light from Geogehan's window was cut off by the body of a man who, cupping his hands about his eyes, stared out into the night, as if to locate the buzz of voices at the back of the store.

"If you're goin' to take me on," said the young man, "I can tell you while we're ridin' toward it. If you ain't — why, there's no need to go no further."

The elder slipped back into its holster the gold-

mounted gun he had drawn, glanced once at the obscured window and again, piercingly, at the boy whose face now showed white in the light of the rising moon. Then he turned his pony and mounted.

"Come on," he commanded.

Five minutes later the two had passed the limits of the town, heading for the low range of hills which encircled it to the south — and Will Arblaster had given the details of his job to the unemotional man at his side.

"How do you know the old guy's got the money?" came a level question.

"I saw him come out of the bank this afternoon, grinnin' all over his face an' stuffin' it into his pants pocket," said the boy. "And when he was gone, I kind of inquired who he was. His name's Sanderson, an' he lives in this yer cabin right ahead a mile. Looked kind of a soft old geezer — kind that'd give up without any trouble. Must ha' been quite some cash there, judgin' by the size of the roll. But I guess when you ask him for it, he won't mind lettin' it go."

"I ain't goin' to ask him," said the lean man. "This is your job."

The boy hesitated.

"Well, if I do it right," he asked, with a trace of tremor in his voice, "will you take me along with you sure?"

"Yeah — I'll take you along."

The two ponies rounded a shoulder of the hill: before the riders there loomed, in the moonlight, the dark shape of a cabin, its windows unlighted. The lean man chuckled.

"He's out."

Will Arblaster swung off his horse.

"Maybe," he said, "but likely the money ain't. He started off home, an' if he's had to go out again, likely he's hid the money some place. Folks know you're about. I'm goin' to see."

Stealthily he crept toward the house. The moon went behind a cloud bank, and the darkness swallowed him. The lean man, sitting his horse, motionless, heard the rap of knuckles on the door — then a pause, and the rattle of the latch. A moment later came the heavy thud of a shoulder against wood — a cracking sound, and a crash as the door went down. The lean man's lips tightened. From within the cabin came the noise of one stumbling over furniture; then the fitful fire of a match illumined the windows. In the quiet, out there in the night, the man on the horse, twenty yards away, could hear the clumping of the other's boots on the rough board floor and every rustle of the papers that he fumbled in his search. Another match scratched and sputtered and then, with a hoarse cry of triumph, was flung down. Running feet padded across the short grass, and Will Arblaster drew up, panting.

"Got it!" he gasped. "The old fool! Put it in a tea canister right on the mantelshelf. Enough to choke a horse! Feel it!"

The lean man, unemotional as ever, reached down and took the roll of money.

"Got another match?" he asked.

Willie struck one and, panting, watched while his

companion, moistening a thumb, ruffled through the bills.

"Fifty tens," said the lean man. "Five hundred dollars. Guess I'll carry it."

His cold blue eyes turned downward and focused again with piercing attention on the younger man's upturned face. The bills were stowed in a pocket of the belt right next one of those gold-mounted guns which, earlier in the evening, had covered Willie Arblaster's heart. For a moment, the lean man's hand seemed to hesitate over its butt; then, as Willie smiled and nodded, it moved away. The match burned out.

"Let's get out of here," the younger urged; whereupon the hand which had hovered over the gun butt grasped Will Arblaster's shoulder.

"No, not yet," he said quietly, "not just yet. Get on your hawss, an' set still awhile."

The young man mounted. "What's the idea?"

"Why!" said the level voice at his right. "This is a kind of novelty to me. Robbin' trains, you ain't got any chance to see results, like; this here's different. Figure this old guy'll be back pretty soon. I'd like to see what he does when he finds his wad's gone. Ought to be amusin'!"

Arblaster chuckled uncertainly.

"Ain't he liable to —"

"He can't see us," said the lean man with a certain new cheerfulness in his tone. "An' besides, he'll think we'd naturally be miles away; an' besides that, we're mounted, all ready."



"What's that?" whispered the young man, laying a hand on his companion's arm.

The other listened.

"Probably him," he said. "Now stay still."

There were two riders — by their voices, a man and a girl; they were laughing as they approached the rear of the house, where, roughly made of old boards, stood Pa Sanderson's substitute for a stable. They put up the horses; then their words came clearer to the ears of the listeners, as they turned the corner of the building, walking toward the front door.

"I feel mean about it, anyhow," said the girl's voice. "You going on living here, Daddy, while —"

"Tut-tut-tut!" said the old man. "What's five hundred to me? I ain't never had that much in a lump, an' shouldn't know what to do with it if I had. 'Sides, your Aunt Alviry didn't give it you for nothin'. 'If she wants to go to college,' says she, 'let her prove it by workin'. I'll pay half, but she's got to pay t'other half.' Well, you worked an' — Where on earth did I put that key?"

There was a silence, broken by the grunts of the old man as he contorted himself in the search of his pockets; and then the girl spoke; the tone of her voice was the more terrible for the restraint she was putting on it.

"Daddy — the — the — did you leave the money in the house?"

"Yes. What is it?" cried the old man.

"Daddy — the door's broken down, and —"

There was a hoarse cry; boot heels stumbled across the boards, and again a match flared. Its pale light showed

a girl standing in the doorway of the cabin, her hands clasped on her bosom — while beyond the wreckage of the door a bent figure with silver hair tottered away from the mantelshef. In one hand Pa Sanderson held the flickering match, in the other a tin box.

“Gone!” he cried in his cracked voice. “Gone!”

Willie Arblaster drew a breath through his teeth and moved uneasily in his saddle. Instantly a lean, strong hand, with a grip like steel, fell on his wrist and grasped it. The man behind the hand chuckled.

“Listen!” he said.

“Daddy — Daddy — don’t take on so — please don’t,” came the girl’s voice, itself trembling with repressed tears. There was a scrape of chair legs on the floor as she forced the old man into his seat by the fireplace. He hunched there, his face in his hands, while she struck a match and laid the flame to the wick of the lamp on the table. As it burned up she went back to her father, knelt by him, and threw her arms about his neck.

“Now, now, now!” she pleaded. “Now, Daddy, it’s all right. Don’t take on so. It’s all right.”

But he would not be comforted.

“I can’t replace it!” cried Pa Sanderson, dropping trembling hands from his face. “It’s gone! Two years you’ve been away from me; two years you’ve slaved in a store; and now I’ve —”

“Hush, hush!” the girl begged. “Now, Daddy — it’s all right. I can go on working, and —”

With a convulsive effort, the old man got to his feet.

"Two years more slavery, while some skunk drinks your money, gambles it — throws it away!" he cried. "Curse him! Whoever it is, curse him! Where's God's justice? What's a man goin' to believe when years of scrapin' like your aunt done, an' years of slavin' like yours in Laredo there, an' all our happiness today can be wiped out by a damned thief in a minute?"

The girl put her little hand over her father's mouth.

"Don't, Daddy," she choked. "It only makes it worse. Come and lie down on your bed, and I'll make you some coffee. Don't cry, Daddy darling. Please."

Gently, like a mother with a little child, she led the heartbroken old man out of the watchers' line of vision, out of the circle of lamplight. More faintly, but still with heart-rending distinctness, the listeners could hear the sounds of weeping.

The lean man sniffed, chuckled, and pulled his bridle.

"Some circus!" he said appreciatively. "C'mon, boy."

His horse moved a few paces, but Will Arblaster's did not. The lean man turned in his saddle.

"Ain't you comin'?" he asked.

For ten seconds, perhaps, the boy made no answer. Then he urged his pony forward until it stood side by side with his companion's.

"No," he said. "An' — an' I ain't goin' to take that money, neither."

"Huh?"

The voice was slow and meditative.

"Don't know as ever I figured what this game meant," he said. "Always seemed to me that all the hardships was on the stick-up man's side — gettin' shot at an' chased and so on. Kind of fun, at that. Never thought 'bout — old men cryin'."

"That ain't my fault," said the lean man.

"No," said Will Arblaster, still very slowly. "But I'm goin' to take that money back. You didn't have no trouble gettin' it, so you don't lose nothin'."

"Suppose I say I won't let go of it?" suggested the lean man with a sneer.

"Then," snarled Arblaster, "I'll blow your damned head off an' take it! Don't you move, you! I've got you covered. I'll take the money out myself."

His revolver muzzle under his companion's nose, he snapped open the pocket of the belt and extracted the roll of bills. Then, regardless of a possible shot in the back, he swung off his horse and shambled, with the mincing gait of the born horseman, into the lighted doorway of the cabin. The lean man, unemotional as ever, sat perfectly still, looking alternately at the cloud-dappled sky and at the cabin, from which now came a murmur of voices harmonizing with a strange effect of joy, to the half-heard bass of the night wind.

It was a full ten minutes before Will Arblaster reappeared in the doorway alone, and made, while silhouetted against the light, a quick movement of his hand across his eyes, then stumbled forward through the darkness toward his horse. Still the lean man did not move.

"I'm — sorry," said the boy as he mounted. "But —"

"I ain't," said the lean man quietly. "What do you think I made you stay an' watch for, you young fool?"

The boy made no reply. Suddenly the hair prickled on the back of his neck and his jaw fell.

"Say," he demanded hoarsely at last. "Ain't you Pecos Tommy?"

The lean man's answer was a short laugh.

"But you got his guns, an' the people in Longhorn all kind of fell back!" the boy cried. "If you ain't him, who are you?"

The moon had drifted from behind a cloud and flung a ray of light across the face of the lean man as he turned it, narrow-eyed, toward Arblaster. The pallid light picked out with terrible distinctness the grim lines of that face — emphasized the cluster of sun wrinkles about the corners of the piercing eyes and marked as if with under-scoring black lines the long sweep of the fighting jaw.

"Why," said the lean man dryly, "I'm the sheriff that killed him yesterday. Let's be ridin' back."

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. What is your first impression of the hard-faced man?
2. Why does the boy call him Tommy? What does the way the boy addresses him tell the man about the boy?
3. Why does he want to join the older man?
4. Why does the older man insist that the robbery is Will's job? What does Will think is the reason for his insistence?

5. Why does the older man say that he thinks the discovery of the robbery is amusing?
6. What changes Will's idea of the bravery and joy of robbery?
7. Why is Will able to get the rolls of bills so easily from his companion?
8. What is the reason for Will's mistaken idea of the identity of his companion?
9. Were you surprised at the conclusion, or had you guessed it? If you guessed it, what gave you the clue?
10. What necessary lesson does the lean man teach Will? What do you think might be done to help boys like Will? What is done to help boys like Will who live in your town or city?

#### *If You Want to Talk or Write*

Use the conversation in the story; add what you think may be necessary, and give this story in your classroom as a short radio play. If you can manage to borrow a screen, the actors can stand behind it and try through their voices alone to convey to their classmates the excitement of this short story.

#### *If You Want to Read*

"The Sheriff's Educated Son," Raymond S. Spears

"So Long, Old-Timer," Edmund Ware

"A Fool about a Horse," Santee Ross

"Tennessee's Partner," Bret Harte

*You Can't Win*, Jack Black (a true story by an ex-burglar)

## CLODHOPPER

by Sarah Addington

SOMETIMES boys and girls for whom going to school is difficult because of poverty or lack of understanding at home appreciate a high-school education more keenly than their classmates for whom life is easier. They therefore work harder and are often more successful than their fellows. But such earnest students sometimes forget that belonging to clubs, joining in sports, and making friends are also important. Stephen's life was all work and no play — until Mattie came along. But his way had its rewards, for if he hadn't been Stephen, and "different," Mattie wouldn't have bothered about him.

SARAH ADDINGTON has written delightful stories for young readers, *The Boy of Pudding Lane* and its sequels. She was born in Cincinnati and graduated from Earlham College in Indiana. She later studied at Columbia, and married Mr. Howard Carl Reid. So much you can learn from *Who's Who in America*. From Mexico, where she is living at present, she writes: "I did newspaper work, publicity, and magazine work before I settled down to free-lancing and fiction. 'Hound of Heaven,' a short story later made into a small book, is perhaps my best-known and best-liked story. I got the character of 'Clodhopper' straight from life: my husband was Stephen, and the plot, if you can call it a plot, derived from the character, I suppose. The setting is Richmond, Indiana, as it was in 1904 when Stephen was in his first year of walking fourteen miles a day to school and thinking school well worth it."



## CLODHOPPER

STEPHEN turned the corner at the railroad station and started up the windy snow-packed road that meandered for five slow miles before it got to his home. Here began the pull to which the first mile through town was but a prelude, and here he usually stopped to scan the cross-roads for a friendly buggy or automobile. But today he did not stop. It was cold, the sky was chilly gray, and he unconsciously walked fast over the hard-packed snow. But Stephen wasn't thinking of the cold. He was thinking of what had happened that afternoon at school.

He was alone in the chemistry laboratory, and he had looked up from his notebook to find Mattie Fulghum standing by his table. She had smiled at him and begun talking.

"You ought to come to dancing school, Stephen. Don't you ever?"

"Dancing school," he had repeated stupidly.

"Yes." Mattie's eyes encouraged him. "At the Elks' Hall Friday nights. Didn't you ever?"

He shook his head.

"It's fun," said Mattie. "The lessons begin at seven, and there's general dancing afterward. Most of the kids go. Why don't you — this Friday night?"

Why didn't he? What a question. Why didn't he do anything but work and go to school? Because he didn't

know how, because he had no money, because he hadn't time — there were a hundred reasons.

"How —" he began, stammering.

"It costs fifty cents," the practical Mattie told him. "You could try it once, and if you liked it you could go often. I could go with you. I have a ticket — for the whole term."

She was coaxing him now, this little Mattie of the smooth brown hair and slim waist and gold locket. The locket nestled in the white hollow of her throat and Stephen had often looked at it, and at her across the laboratory table. And now what was she saying to him? Dancing school. She would go with him. He could go often.

He could not see himself dancing. He had never thought of such a thing for himself; indeed, he was hardly aware that dancing existed for anybody. Yet, "I'll go," he had said recklessly.

And now on the road toward home he was wondering how he could ever manage it. Where would he ever get fifty cents? What would his father say? Who would do the milking on Friday night? These were unanswerable questions, but Stephen dismissed them as he pictured himself dancing in a lighted hall where other boys and girls were dancing, and at the picture he smiled into the fading afternoon. Mattie! How warm his feeling toward her! A feeling almost warm enough to heat his toes down there in their clumsy shoes. Not quite, however, for becoming conscious at last of the cold, he pulled from

his pockets two burlap bags and tied his feet up in them — he had used paper bags once, but burlap was far better, he had found — then shuffled on.

Clem Hoover had finally accepted the phenomenon of Stephen's going to high school, but he had never really understood it. The issue was such a simple one to him. They were poor and Stephen was needed on the farm. High school merely postponed by four years his term of service as a farm hand. Hence, this dead set for high school was all wasted time and energy, and why Stephen didn't see it that way Clem Hoover for the life of him couldn't comprehend.

Yet never, since that September day two years before when Stephen had first started off for town and high school, had his father uttered one word of opposition or criticism. A slight, gray-eyed boy with hair in his eyes had walked out the front gate on that day, and Clem Hoover, who at first had a fleeting and furious desire to strap him, watched him, bewildered, down the road, then went about the chores, alone.

For a while Clem had waited to see what next madness the boy would commit, and when neighbors felicitated him on having a son who led his class at high school, when people called Stephen plucky to walk his twelve miles daily and never miss a day of school, Clem had turned on them a simple stare: they were crazy too. Later Clem came to wonder if the boy were so crazy, after all. He seemed really sound for a boy. He worked well and was steady. He even had a way about him that Clem almost

envied. Stephen held his head so high on such straight shoulders; there was something about his eyes. He seemed unbreakable, and Clem, who had broken so long ago, came at last even to respect this boy who so clearly respected himself.

Stephen meanwhile rose at four to make fires, feed stock, carry water and wood; came home from school to milk cows and feed stock and bank fires. He could not find it in his heart to resent his father's hostility to high school; he could only pity his father, a pity that at times came over him with such a rush that it nearly floored him. For his father didn't know the richness of going to high school. Didn't even guess it. And Stephen, who knew that richness so well, at those times would hug it to his heart in sudden panic — suppose he had missed it! — and would almost yearn over the barrenness of his father's life, and he would resolve to himself to make it up to his father somehow, if not now, later, when he was grown up and had time. For so crowded was Stephen's life at sixteen that he innocently supposed leisure to be a product of maturity. Yes, he must make it up to him.

Yet Stephen and his father could never be intimate; the breach of temperament was too wide for that. It no more occurred to Stephen to ask advice or help from his father than it occurred to Clem to offer them. It was reserved for Mrs. Hoover to be the intimate of both. She understood them, each one, and loved them wisely, and if not impartially, at least differently; and they both trusted her to the core.

And so that night, it was only after Clem had gone to bed and Stephen and his mother were alone under the lamp that he could bring himself to mention what was so noisy in his mind.

"Maw."

"Eh?" She looked up from her mending.

"Mattie Fulghum was telling me today — there's a dancing school in town — every Friday night —"

"Is there?" She pushed back her glasses with friendly interest.

"And I —" he choked ever so slightly and pushed on, "I thought I'd like to go — once, anyway."

"Well!" spluttered Mrs. Hoover in profound astonishment. "Well!" Then hastily, "Why, I guess you could, Stephen. I guess you could." She spoke heartily.

He was silent. The proposal sounded wild enough now.

"You don't have much in the way of young life, Stephen," she said.

"It's fifty cents," he told her.

"I have some money," she said coolly. "I can give you fifty cents if that's all it takes."

He stared at her. All it takes! When she knew as well as he that fifty cents was a fortune.

"It's at night, you know." He was actually piling up obstacles for himself now; the whole plan sounded too fantastic.

"What of that?" she asked boldly, though her own

brain whirled. A boy to dance at night and walk six miles home in the snow — it did seem — she braced herself again and her blue eyes flashed.

“Of course you’ll go,” she told him.

“I don’t know.” He couldn’t be sure she understood it fully. Gadding to town nights . . .

“You must go, boy.” Then she laughed over at him. “I don’t believe you want to!”

“Oh, maw!” he cried fervently.

His mother settled the details. She would provide the money, she would milk that night — well then, when Stephen objected, Clem could do it this once. Stephen could take some extra sandwiches for supper, eat them in the high-school building, and present himself at the Elks’ Hall at half-past seven. All as simple as could be.

So Stephen was going to dancing school. And in a flash, life took on a sharp, exciting new edge. Books and cows and teachers and country roads, snows, rains, chores, lessons, these were but background now, rather dull background, too, where they had all seemed so eventful before, and the great new fact stood out from them thrillingly: Stephen was going to dancing school!

It snowed that week, and Stephen one morning had to flounder his endless way through a desert of sticky dampness, wet to the skin when he got to school and only to be dried out by half an hour’s perch on warm furnace pipes in the school basement. Mike, the janitor, had often lent him this aid in other snows; any wet morning was apt to find Stephen sprawled high on Mike’s pipes,

Mike's dry coat wrapped around him. As he lay there steaming that morning he told Mike about the dance. Mike, leaning on his shovel, listened intently, his very eyebrows beetling with interest.

"Good," he said when Stephen had finished. He opened the furnace door, spat reflectively thereinto. "Good," he said again.

Nobody else in the whole school knew. Nobody but Mattie and Mike knew that Stephen on the coming Friday was going to dancing school. Yet somehow now, Stephen felt a new kinship with all these boys and girls, these careless, confident classmates of his to whom before he had always been alien and strange. He would think, in class (he who never before had thought of anything else in class but his lessons and his books), "I'm going to dancing school. They will all be there." And a glow of friendliness would suffuse him, the pleasant, friendly glow of comradeship.

His mother and he talked eternally about it.

"I used to dance, Stephen," she told him.

His mother had danced. The thought shocked him. Did she wear blue aprons in those dancing days of hers, and spectacles, and was her waist this wide? A boy could hardly encircle it now. No, of course not. He had seen her picture as a girl, a young face with heavy twists of hair and puffy sleeves.

"Did paw?" he asked and was relieved when his mother said, "No, he wasn't much of a hand," as that would have been too preposterous.

Stephen and Mattie talked about it, too, at the chapel door and on the stairs between classes.

"You can come for me, Stephen," she said once, a bit shyly, "about seven."

"What?" He looked blankly at her.

"We'll go together," she explained. "We'll be partners for the evening, you see."

Certainly he saw. Why hadn't he thought of that? That's what boys did: call for girls. It came to him now from some far reach of instinct.

"I'll wear my white dress," Mattie confided.

He hoped secretly she would wear the gold locket there in the little white nest under her chin. He wished he could tell her so, but the words wouldn't come.

That night he told his mother more about Mattie. She had brownish eyes, and nice smooth hair, and was small, awfully small. His mother nodded approval.

"She's going to wear a white dress," he said casually.

At this Mrs. Hoover jumped.

"What are you supposed to wear?" she demanded.

Good heavens, he didn't know. Well, you wouldn't wear corduroy pants to dancing school, would you? No, he supposed not.

She hastened up to his closet and brought down his "best suit," stiff black clothes that, as they hung uncomplacably in her hand, showed only too plainly their strangeness to revels.

"You haven't a good shirt," she murmured.

"Oh —"



"You've been needing them. I'll tell you, I'll make you one." She was crimson and alert now.

"Aw —"

Here was another grand innovation. Hitherto clothes had represented the zero point in Stephen's affairs. Corduroys, heavy shoes, a shabby cap — they were like the milk pans and pail in the dairy, things to be used, and that was an end of them. Now clothes had suddenly and alarmingly become an institution. Mrs. Hoover's enthusiasm filled the house and Stephen became dimly aware that his clothes would somehow have a bearing on his success as a patron of dancing schools. Odd, he considered, and it bored him exceedingly. Still, people dressed up for church and funerals, and the County Fair. No doubt dancing school rated with these festivities. But it was a dull business, clothes. His mother went so far as to commandeer his father's overcoat for the occasion. Stephen was not used to an overcoat. It would be heavy and prevent quick walking.

"Look, Stephen, they don't look as if they had ever been worn." His mother had pressed the black suit afresh on this, the day before the event.

He admired the suit duly.

"And here's your tie, the one the Sunday-school teacher gave you." She held up a white wash tie for his gaze.

"Yeh."

"Stephen, I think you'd go in your overalls!" she cried, indignantly. "Do you want to shame Mattie?"

He smiled sheepishly.

"I think I won't show you the shirt, you're so — so —"

She couldn't think of a word and, clucking, went to fetch the shirt. She held it up, a blue chambray affair such as he always wore, exquisitely fashioned, and pride and fondness were so bright on her face that Stephen, for all his indifference, was for the moment caught up in the current.

"It's fine," he said approvingly.

"Of course it's fine," she replied stoutly.

And Stephen, borrowing from his mother's ample store of satisfaction, strutted a little, his eyes brimming with their familiar ardor, his back arrowy as always. It was good to have the right things. He was beginning to see the importance of it. Mattie in her white dress, and he fit and proper to act as her partner. Mattie's partner! His heart glowed. That warm feeling when he thought of Mattie was such a heartening thing.

It seemed rather queer to be alone in the high-school building, that long Friday afternoon. Everybody had gone, but the room was not lonely to Stephen, for those empty seats belonged to boys and girls who were all going to dancing school tonight (and one belonged to Mattie).

For the first time in his life Stephen could not study, could not even get through a sentence, he who at any other time would have embraced the rare opportunity. But today there was only confusion where his brain usually was, confusion and a persistent little rhythm which

ran something like this, "Mattie and dancing school, Mattie and dancing school, Mattie and dancing school."

A dozen times he went to the boys' dressing room to see if his valise was still there. It always was. And that his suit hung safe on its peg. It always did. A dozen times he raised his eyes to the clock and counted the time by hours and minutes, until he should dress, until he should start for Mattie's house.

It was almost dark when Mike came up.

"I told the old women to keep outa here," said Mike. "The old women" were Mike's scrubwomen, a set of crones with whom he waged eternal and zestful warfare. "How you makin' out?"

"All right."

"Had your feed?"

"No. Say, Mike."

"Yes?"

"Did you ever go to dancing school?"

"Me! Hell, no. Do I look like a dancer?"

Mike did not, to be strictly accurate, with his thumping little body and bandy legs.

"You'll get along all right, Steve." Mike was the only person in the world who thus familiarly shortened Stephen's name. "She's a good kid, Mattie. Some of these girls make you sick, but that girl —"

Stephen nodded.

"Say," said Mike, suddenly, "you ain't scared, are you?"

"Of course not."

Mike laughed at the boy's scorn, then snorted. "Well, I should hope you wasn't. As if you couldn't knock that Clifford Frye simp and his bunch for a gool." Mike's animosity for the Clifford Frye simp and his bunch was well founded. They wore pegtops for one thing, which Mike considered effete, and they also stole his ash cans and tied up his school bell.

"I got some hot coffee down in the furnace room if you wanta come down," said Mike. "Bring yer grub."

Stephen didn't like coffee, but he did like Mike. Over the grub Mike introduced wordy talk about women.

"Look here, Stephen, I bet you never kissed a girl, huh?"

Stephen looked frightened.

"Well, take it from me, don't. You're a good kid, and you're gonna get somewhere —"

Stephen squirmed.

"Well, what I mean is, you're not one of these here pompadoured, kissin' guys and don't try to be one. The teachers around here think a lot of you — oh, I know what I'm talking about — and you wanta be the kind that — hell, I don't know how to say it —"

"I'm not thinking of kissing anybody," said Stephen, red over his sandwich.

It was delectably warm and cozy down in Mike's habitat. A yellow lantern swung at their shoulders, by the pipe where Stephen had taken refuge so many times. Their chairs were backless, but they cocked their feet up on warm pipes in masculine luxury. As Mike opened

the furnace door to squint at his fire, the red flare sprang out making exotic and beautiful the dark vastness around them. Stephen felt strangely happy. This moment with Mike in the basement seemed somehow his. Nothing interrupted, nothing interfered. In the distance, an hour away, there would be a girl in his arms and gaiety and crowds, a prospect stirring enough, surely. But now he and Mike, males together, sharing the same fire, the same food, the same mood. It was snug and right and delicious.

Mattie did have the gold locket on. That was the first thing Stephen noticed. It nestled there as always in the little white cup of her throat, and even in the midst of all the strangeness of Mattie's home, with her mother and father lurking ominously around, it made him feel at ease and comfortable. A talisman, that locket, to steady Stephen as even Mattie herself could not steady him in her own twittering flurry.

Mattie finally was ready. Rubbers, coat, scarf on her head. Her mother's insistence on a hat was overruled by a laugh — a mother's experience and anxiety set aside by a mere floating ripple of a laugh. Gloves, a bag full of things — Heaven knew what — she was now a complete entity, it seemed, and ready to start.

"Mattie, have you got your ticket?"

Yes, she had it.

"The key'll be under the mat, daughter."

"Yes, Father, I know."

"Bring her home at eleven, Stephen."

"Yes, sir, I will."

"Mattie, dear, do pull that scarf tight over your head."

"Oh, Mother!"

At last they were off. They were actually on the street alone, Mattie's gloved hand tucked under Stephen's arm, Stephen striding along as if going to dances were but a common business. The air, finely cold, pricked their hot cheeks. Crunch, crunch they trod along, up Mattie's street, over the town's little river, now black and still, and heavy with ice floes. Lamps from people's houses threw out hospitable islands of light for them to walk on — indeed, Stephen felt as if he were treading on light every step. The sky was jocund with stars. They might have been going to dancing school themselves, these stars, so airily did they prank and prance.

Mattie squeezed Stephen's arm.

"Stephen!"

"What?" His answer leaped up at her to make them both laugh.

"Isn't it lovely, the night?"

"Oh, yes, beautiful!" Stephen had never commented on the beauty of a night before, but now the word slipped easily from him.

"Stephen."

"Yes?"

"Are you all dressed up? I couldn't see under your overcoat." It was true. He had kept every inch of it buttoned rigidly to his chin at Mattie's house.

"Sure."

She laughed gleefully.

"Stephen, aren't you glad I asked you to come to-night?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Are you?"

"Of course." She pressed her hand tighter against his arm.

The Elks' Hall popped into view, a narrow space over a stationer's, its two stories lighted at every window. Figures, boys and girls, dived into the doorway and disappeared up the steep dark steps. Mattie and Stephen dived in too, ran up the stairs. At the top a maze of light dresses, dark suits, red and green paper festoons, faces massed in the gallery, a bedlam of high voices, a violin tuning up. This was the dancing school and Stephen was there!

Dancing was easy! Stephen discovered that almost before he had taken a step. He felt it the minute the music had started, and he was all for seizing Mattie then and there and swinging off with her. But Mattie restrained him imperiously.

"It's the grand march."

Oh, was it? Good enough. They rushed into the line, and Mattie ran gasping beside her partner as he stalked around the long narrow hall, flourishing at corners, his feet caressing the floor, scraping it softly.

His knees felt limber and full of music. Pshaw, this was no trick at all. He smiled down at Mattie, confident

and happy. It was the smile he had given his mother that first morning when he had started off for school, a smile his father knew but the shadow of.

And as for the dancing lesson, which began a moment later, you just kept time and took steps like the teacher, and you were dancing. Stephen knew the teacher, he discovered, Bert Holly, who sold shoes by day, though Stephen had never suspected him of this other and frivolous calling.

"Choose your partners!"

He shot across the floor to Mattie and they stumbled off.

"Wait a minute," whispered Mattie.

"I don't quite —" He stopped uncertainly.

"You keep going frontwards," she told him.

"Oh, yes." He could do it now after a fashion. Fine, fine. But bang, there they went head on into Clifford Frye and his girl. Stephen smiled to himself as he wondered if that was what Mike meant by knocking Clifford Frye for a goal.

"'Scuse!" called Mattie after the disappearing couple.

He frowned at his own stupidity. He should have excused himself, of course. You mustn't forget your manners just because —

"Turn around," whispered Mattie frantically. "We can't keep going straight forever."

They turned around, just how, he didn't know, but somehow. The music was ravishing. A fat fellow was whanging away at the piano; the violinist was jiggling his



feet and playing and talking to the passing couples all at once. The music, dancing, and Mattie there so close in his arms, the little locket shining, her lips red — this was joy, and Stephen, his heart uplifted, forgot to ask where this joy came from or how he, Stephen Hoover, the country boy, had suddenly come upon it.

"Am I doing well?" he asked her, exulting because he knew that he was.

"Perfect! Stephen, I never would have dreamed —"

"It's because I'm with you." What made him say that? But he was glad he had. It made Mattie smile, too, the shy smile that played on her lips so slightly and made a tiny tender quirk in her cheek.

His hair was in his eyes when they stopped; the white cravat flowed from its moorings.

"Say!" He laughed, flinging back his hair and grabbing the tie.

"Stephen, you're going to be a wonderful dancer. How in the world can you — Have you been taking lessons on the sly?"

"No." But at the idea he laughed again.

Mattie did wonder, slightly, at Stephen. One of the simplest creatures in the world was Mattie at sixteen, knowing what some people never learn, that the world must be taken pretty much as it is. She had taken Stephen as he was. She had chosen him, and his country clothes, his halting manners, his glaring rusticity slipped away as by magic in her fond and understanding eyes. Yet tonight she could not help wondering at Stephen.

His ridiculous shoes. That frightful tie — it got into her eyes, flapped against her mouth, slapped at her cheek. His hands were rough. His hair was unruly. Of all the sleek, smooth, gay young things in that room, he alone was irrelevant, foreign, wrong. Yet always he bore himself with that arrowy erectness.

At nine the lesson was over. The music stopped, the younger pupils left, and General Dancing began.

Stephen took his Mattie in his arms and danced in a glad daze. If he saw boys he knew at school, it was to nod at them absently. If a girl caught his eye, he responded with a vague smile. The faces of lookers-on, the bobbing paper garlands, the moving pattern of figures, feet, eyes, white collars, bright frocks, all was as a blank to Stephen, who in his trance knew nothing save that music had somehow become translated into his legs and that Mattie was in his embrace.

Back of him in a haze lay all his old life, the round of grinding work and hardship and effort that made his boyhood so different from that of the boys and girls all around him tonight. That life was good, he still felt, but this life was good too, and so exciting and beautiful. Stephen wondered now how he could have waited so long to come to his first dance.

Stephen was standing in the corridor between dances waiting for Mattie, who had gone, for the hundredth time, to powder her little nose. Boys and girls spoke to him as they passed. "Hello, Stephen!" "Having a good time, Stephen?" and he nodded carelessly. Yester-

day when nobody cared whether he was having a good time or not, he would have given his head for such greetings with their new fraternal note, and yet now he could only muster a careless nod for them.

A horde of giggling, guffawing girls and boys swarmed up to the water cooler, and he made way for them, drawing back into the shadow. When they finally straggled off by twos at the sound of the music, Stephen was left alone, hidden in his corner. He stood there in the shadow, and as he waited, eager for Mattie and the feel of the dance floor under his feet, a new tide of ecstasy rushed over him.

Two girls came along the corridor, passed without seeing him, stopped.

"Wait a minute, Betty. This darned strap."

She began to wrench at something under her bodice. She was close enough to Stephen for him to touch her. He looked toward the door. Mattie would be back any minute now.

"Say, have you seen Stephen Hoover?"

"Oh, my dear!"

They laughed softly.

"Isn't it the *limit*? Wouldn't you think he'd know better?"

"Oh, I don't know. He's just a clodhopper."

"I know, but even a clodhopper! A blue shirt! And that funny collar."

"I'll bet mamma made 'em for him."

"And say, Betty, did you see Stephen's tie?"

They laughed again, the amused two.

"Well, he's got nerve. You'll have to hand it to him for that."

Another giggle. "But I feel sorry for Mattie. Such a clown."

Their voices were lost as they passed on.

Mattie came out from her primping, breathless, laughing.

"Let's hurry! I'm sorry I was so slow."

He adjusted his tie with careful shaky fingers and spoke.

"I'm going home."

"Going home?" repeated Mattie. "You're going? What —"

"I must go," said Stephen.

Mattie looked at him sharply. A hideous coldness seized her.

"What is it, Stephen? What's happened?"

"Nothing," he said doggedly. "But I've got to go."

"All right, Stephen, I — I don't mind."

In the dressing room, Stephen hunched himself into his father's old black coat. A mirror threw him a fleeting picture: a wild-eyed boy in ill-fitting clothes, a flapping tie, a blue work shirt. As he and Mattie passed the dance-hall door he had another flying image, that of Clifford Frye, crisp, tailored, easy, waggish, Betty and Florrie at his side.

They walked along in the keen night air, Mattie desperately gay.

"Next time we're going to have the waltz, Stephen. I know you'll be a peachy waltzer."

Next time!

"Oh, Stephen, you're walking so fast. Are you in such a hurry to get me home? I'm not in a hurry."

He muttered something and slowed down.

"Stephen." She edged up closer to him. "Guess what we're goin' to do when we get home."

"What? I can't guess."

"We're going to have a little party, you and me. Cocoa. And I made some cakes this afternoon. On a little table all by ourselves."

He squeezed her hand under his arm.

"You do like that, don't you, Stephen?"

"Yes, fine, Mattie."

"Stephen, *what* is the matter? Are you mad at me? Are you sorry you went?"

He looked down at her hurt little face.

"Mad at you? No. I'm just — no, Mattie, I'm not mad at you." He tried to laugh at the impossibility of that and strode on faster again. And Mattie, her steadfast heart sharp with fear, trotted beside him surmising a thousand wild reasons for Stephen's strange behavior.

When they got to the house, he didn't want to go in, and when they went in, he didn't want to take off his coat.

"But of course, Stephen, you'll take off your coat." She laughed, a little hysterically, as she trotted around

switching lights off and on, removing her wraps, stooping to touch off a gas log in the grate.

"There!" She stood up to smile determinedly at him. "Stephen, you haven't taken off your coat. Aren't you silly?"

He stood dumb in the glare of the little parlor, his coat buttoned to the chin, his cap in one hand. And at the white agony of his face, Mattie flew over to him.

"Stephen, you're sick, aren't you? Here, take off your coat, do, and sit by the fire. The cocoa will brace you up, I'm sure it will."

She tried to unbutton the coat, and Stephen, for the life of him, couldn't stop her. She tugged at the arms, and at last he was out of it and stood revealed before her. He felt as if it were the very sun there in the electric bulb over their heads, showing him up in its relentless blaze. The stiff clothes, the offending blue shirt, the wayward tie . . . Clodhopper . . . "I feel sorry for Mattie."

Mattie was dragging him to a chair.

"Look, Stephen, my narcissus bulbs have begun to bloom." She had them in the center of the little festive table. "I thought they never would, though. I love them, don't you? Stephen, are you all right if I go to the kitchen a minute and heat up the cocoa? I'll hurry. Mother's left it all fixed."

She came back with a plate which she eyed dubiously.

"If you're sick, Stephen, you oughtn't to eat cakes, I s'pose. I'll make some toast."

"Don't —" But she was gone again.

Stephen tried to drink the cocoa to please her, and he ate his toast and a cake, to boot, and told her they were fine. But still that white torture sat on his face so that finally Mattie set her cup down with a bang.

"Stephen, you've got to tell me what's the matter. You're not sick. It's something else. You must tell me."

No. He shook his head. And she knew hopelessly he never would.

The gas flare burned cozily in the tiny sitting room. Mattie's narcissus blooms sent out heavy fragrance, Mattie's spoon clinked against her cup, and her cup clinked against her saucer, the only noises to break the stillness of the house. Except, for Stephen, the dull thud of his heart and the echo of soft, derisive laughter.

"Stephen," Mattie sat straight and faced him, her face aflame. "Stephen, I'm sorry you didn't have a good time tonight — I mean — that it turned out bad somehow. But I do want to tell you something, Stephen."

"Yes?"

Mattie hesitated, then began timidly, "I want to tell you — how — proud I was of you tonight."

Stephen frowned at her.

"I was awfully proud of you, Stephen."

"Proud!" he said it sharply. Was Mattie —

"Proud. Exactly that."

"You — were — proud — of — me?" He repeated the words as if they didn't make sense, his face screwed into a knot of perplexity and daze.

"Of course I was proud. The way you —" she hesi-

tated, shy and a little breathless. "The way you carried yourself, Stephen. The way you didn't care about anything, even if it was your first time."

It still didn't make sense to Stephen. The girl was dotty, he thought, or a brazen little liar.

"You ought to see some of the boys at their first dance, falling all over themselves. They're terrible. But not you, Stephen. You danced right, you acted right, you were right."

"I was all right?" he demanded.

"Perfect."

"Everything about me?" Now he would catch her. She was fooling with him and he would catch her at it.

"Oh, you're not a Cliff Frye, if that's what you want to know," she said a little scornfully. "But you don't want to be. You're not that kind. Oh, don't be like those smart Alecks, Stephen. You're Stephen Hoover. That ought to be good enough for you. It's good enough for me!"

She finished up breathlessly in relief and bravado. There, she had said it, whatever Stephen thought.

As Stephen looked at her little pink face, earnest and sweet in the lamp light, he suddenly saw Mike's puggy features coming at him from the darkness around the furnace, and he heard Mike's words, "You're not one of these here pompadoured kissin' guys and don't you try to be one." And it came to him in a gust of relief that he didn't care the least rap any more what Betty and Florrie thought. Who were Betty and Florrie to him?



A couple of frizzy-headed girls whom he had hardly spoken to.

Suddenly his heart lifted. All his old ecstasies came trooping back to him, school, Mattie, his mother, Mike (he could even smile to himself at Mike's place in the forerank of honorables), what he was going to do when he grew up, the whole absorbing business of life as he knew it. And he knew then that he wouldn't trade places with Clifford Frye or any of his kind for anything in the world. He was Stephen Hoover, as Mattie said. He had his own treasures, his own dreams, his own life. And Mattie was his friend, Mattie who sat opposite him now, her sweet face puckered with anxiety and distress. He straightened up in his chair and smiled. Mike and Mattie and school and his mother and all the other things.

As Stephen walked home on the dark country road, his shoulders bore the old arrowy erectness under his father's drooping coat; his eyes lifted their old radiance to the stars. Mike and Mattie and at home, sleeping, his mother.

He buttoned his overcoat close over the new blue shirt, shifted his valise to the other hand, and walked steadily on —

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. What is the meaning of the title?
2. Why does Mattie ask Stephen to go to dancing school with her even though he is a "clodhopper"?

3. Why does Stephen tell his mother, but not his father, about the dance?
4. In what ways does Stephen's mother help him?
5. How does Mattie cleverly try to help Stephen, even before the dancing lesson?
6. How does Mike help Stephen? Why does Mike prefer him to Clifford Frye and his friends?
7. What kind of time does Stephen expect to have at the party, and what kind of time does he have at first?
8. What changes the whole evening for him? Why does the incident that changes everything hurt him so badly?
9. Why will he not tell Mattie what has happened to spoil his pleasure?
10. What qualities does Mattie have that Betty and Florrie lack?
11. What finally makes everything all right for Stephen?

*If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. Are there "Stephens" in your school? This does not mean that you are to think over the boys and girls who are your classmates. Rather, try to decide whether every student in your school has the same chance as every other student, not only to study, but to play and to have a good time. If this is not so, what can you do to change the situation?
2. Imagine two scenes that do not occur in the story. Think what the people might say; write out their conversation; and then act out the scenes in class.

Mattie tells her mother about the dance before she goes to bed.

Mattie and Betty talk about the dance the next day before school starts.
3. Write or tell about a time when you felt like a "clodhopper." The title might be:

My First Party

The Time I Wore the Wrong Clothes  
My Most Embarrassing Moment

4. Is there any danger that you or some of your classmates have difficulties the opposite of Stephen's — that your life becomes all play and no work, unless you are careful? Why is this true, or not true?

*If You Want to Read*

*Abe Lincoln Grows Up*, Carl Sandburg (the story of a clodhopper in real life)

*Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott (especially the chapter where Jo has to wear the scorched dress)

"Sixteen," Maureen Daly

"Her Own Sweet Simplicity" and "One with Shakespeare," Martha Foley

"This Is Our Daughter," Brooke Hanlon

"A Student of Languages," Elsie Singmaster



## "TRUTH IS STRANGER —"

by David E. Adams

IT is often said that the most ordinary life has some exciting incident in it, some romance, and that everyone can be the hero of at least one story as thrilling or romantic as "make-believe." In this story of the adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart you will meet ordinary people, as ordinary as the people next door. But they chugged up the side of a canyon, rounded a bad curve, and drove straight into adventure, an adventure so much stranger than storybook romance that they were ready to believe the old saying, "Truth is stranger than fiction."

"TRUTH IS STRANGER —" is so amusing that it makes you wish that the Reverend David E. Adams had more time to write entertaining stories. But his is a busy life. His duties as assistant professor of religion in Marietta College and as pastor of a church in Marietta, Ohio, leave him little time to devote to his hobby of writing short stories.

Dr. Adams comes from New England. He was born in New Hampshire and educated at Phillips Andover Academy and at Dartmouth College. He studied for the ministry at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Before going to Ohio, he held pastorates in Congregational churches in several towns in Massachusetts.

## “TRUTH IS STRANGER —”

“YOU’LL have to shift, Andrew.” Mrs. Stewart leaned her pudgy weight forward to give a slight additional impulse to the laboring sedan.

“The top’s nowhere in sight,” muttered her spouse, cautiously jamming down his left foot and shifting in his seat as the car settled into a slow, noisy grind. “It’ll take a heap o’ gas to go up in low. See what that guideboard says.” Mrs. Stewart craned her neck at the tipsy board stuck in the gravel bank at her right.

“Avalon fourteen miles.”

The little man at the wheel growled but said nothing. The road stretched straight ahead — up, up, up. On the right a steep bank of rocks and gravel sloped sharply down from the mountainside clear to the wheel track. On the left an irregular line of roughhewn boulders marked the limit beyond which the narrow roadway dropped off a thousand feet into space. So narrow was the track that now and again the hub caps grated warningly against the rocky barrier, as the car lurched upward over rough-dug water bars. Across the canyon, a mile or more, the dark forested slopes rose grim and forbidding. Clouds hung low above, from which spurts of moisture now and then could be seen sheeting down into the canyon. The afternoon sun had already sunk below the jutting sky line, and shadows lurked in the rocky walls to which the road clung with what seemed a precarious grasp.

"I wish we were out of this," said Mrs. Stewart, almost in a whisper. "Whatever made you try it?" She shivered as a gust of wind silvered the windshield with a sudden film of moisture.

Andy did not take his eyes from the road. He only shifted again in his seat to relieve his aching leg without relaxing his firm pressure on the pedal that held the flivver in low. He was a gray little man, with little stringy gray side whiskers, which failed utterly to hide a little gray receding chin.

"I really don't know, Maria. I wish myself we hadn't come. Everybody told us this was a wonderful trip, but I shall be thankful if we ever get out of here. I wish I was right back behind the counter this minute, weighing sugar."

"I don't wish that, Andy." Maria spoke firmly, although she glanced apprehensively about as she did so. "You haven't had a vacation in ten years, and you need one. But I wish we hadn't come up here." Andy gave a quick side glance to the left.

"This canyon is supposed to be one of the beauty spots of the country, but we're altogether too near the edge to suit me." He fixed his eyes, owl-like behind huge spectacles, upon the road again. The clouds seemed to drop lower as they ascended, and a fine mist filled the air. "Sit steady; there's a sharp curve ahead, and I can't see well."

The car ground slowly around the curve. Suddenly out of the thickening mist loomed another car headed



downward. Maria screamed and grabbed Andy's arm. With a quick lunge, Andy pushed her aside and reached for the emergency. As the sedan ground to a stop, he perceived, however, that the other car was not moving, and apparently not occupied, though it filled the exact middle of the road and blocked all further progress.

"What do you suppose —" he began mildly, but his sentence was not finished.

A masked figure stepped suddenly forward from behind a jutting rock on the curve just ahead of the sedan.

"Stick 'em up!" Falteringly Andy raised his arms as high as the top of the sedan would allow. Maria followed his example, breathing hard, her hat very much awry, her little round fat face a picture of fear and misery. But the man with the gun was not looking at pictures. Partly lowering his automatic, as if he saw that it was no longer needed, he spoke over his shoulder.

"Come on, Bill, jack 'em up." Another figure emerged from behind the rock. In the moment of his approach Andy noticed that the masks of both were greasy bandannas with irregular slits for eyeholes. The second man was short and thickset and limped slightly as he came forward to the side of the sedan.

"Get out," he growled.

"I — I — c-can't take my foot off the brake — the emergency doesn't hold."

"They never do," replied the robber shortly. "Keep your hands up." He jerked the door open on Andy's

side, seized the wheel, and twisted it sharply to the right. The sedan lurched backward into the gravel. "Now come out of it, both of you."

"But the car's headed over the bank," protested Andy feebly.

"All the easier to push it over when we get through with you."

Painfully Andy straightened his stiff leg and climbed down, his hands wavering above his head. Maria followed him, scrooging by the wheel as best she could. The thickset man pointed to the outer edge of the road.

"Get away from the car." Then he began to go through Andy's pockets, taking out everything that he found. Andy's worn fountain pen came first. The robber glanced at it and tossed it over his shoulder — into nothingness. He extracted a few bills from the worn wallet which came next; with the other hand he fished out Andy's Ingersoll, and that too went over the brink. Slowly the little Scotchman's ire rose, as he felt his lean ribs poked and pushed in search of plunder. His knees trembled. The sweat poured down his forehead and streaked his glasses. One by one his prized small possessions were tossed into the canyon.

"Nothin' doin'," growled his tormentor. "There ain't five bucks on him."

"Then you'll have to try the First National," snapped the other, raising his gun. Andy's assailant turned suddenly and grabbed for Maria's skirt hem, half-kneeling as he did so.

Andy's knees stopped trembling. A cold fury seized him. His roving eye spotted a jagged rock about the size of a man's head, not twelve inches from his right foot, lying loose in the roadbed. They would, would they! He'd show them! He looked cautiously toward the man with the gun, who had turned and was looking out into the canyon. Andy feigned an expression of horror, looked straight up the road past the man with the gun, and cried out, "Your car — look out! "

The gunman whirled. Andy became in that moment endowed with superhuman strength. A long step, and his right hand grasped the slack trouser seat of the man reaching for his wife's ankle. A heave, and over the low barrier of rock the robber followed Andy's possessions. As the gunman swung back in vexation at Andy's ruse, his face collided violently with a jagged rock hurtling through the air. He dropped his gun, staggered backward, and before he could recover himself from the blow something landed like a catapult upon his chest. That was all he knew about it! In another moment Andy dragged his second victim to the edge of the roadway and pitched him too into oblivion.

Maria, her mouth hanging open in dumfounded astonishment, stood looking at her mild-mannered little spouse. "Why, Andy Stewart, what have you done? You've killed those men! "

Andy looked at her. He was standing in the middle of the road. His glasses were gone. His hat was gone. A streak of blood stained his right hand. "Yes, I hope so.

I'll teach them to throw away my things and insult my wife."

Without another word he turned and strode up the road to the standing car. He turned the steering wheel, reached in and released the brake; the car moved forward across the road to the rock barrier. Sweating and muttering, Andy pushed aside several of the smaller rocks which impeded its progress. Then he got behind and pushed. With a wild lurch, the car followed its owners over the brink. Andy replaced the stones, smoothed over the ruts with one foot, brushed the dirt from his shoe, and returned to his wife.

"I guess we'll be going. Get in."

Without a word Maria climbed into the sedan. Andy looked around upon the scene of combat. He recovered his hat and glasses, wiped his hands on a piece of waste, and tossed it carefully over the brink. He stood for a moment beside the car. A cold gust swirled up over the edge of the canyon. The sky grew dark. Stiffly he climbed in and stepped on the starter. For twenty minutes the car ground slowly upward through the gathering gloom. Andy's hands began to shake. Sweat stood on his brow. His lips grew dry. He glanced at his wife. She sat hunched forward, peering through the darkness ahead, her face pale, her hat still awry.

"I—I—" began Andy.

"What are you going to do, Andrew Stewart?" She turned toward this man whom she had known for years, half-fearfully, as if she were addressing a stranger.

"I don't know. It all seems like a dream. It wasn't me that killed those men. It couldn't have been." The steering wheel wobbled as he spoke, and the car lurched toward the dangerous side of the road.

"Be careful!" cried Maria sharply. "I never saw you like that before. It's all too terrible. Why didn't you just let them take what they wanted?"

"Because they intended to push our car over the edge when they got through, and probably we would have gone with it."

Maria gasped. Her eyes widened.

"But what can we do about it?"

"Nothing much, I guess. I wish I was back at home filling kerosene cans. I s'pose I'll have to stop at the next town and give myself up."

"Don't you do anything of the sort."

"It'll be found out if I don't, and then where'll we be?"

"You killed them in self-defense."

The grade grew steeper. The rain fell faster and faster. The lights pierced only a few yards into the darkness. Then the car shot forward. The rain ceased, and a spatter of lights appeared away to the right.

"We must be up — those lights would be Avalon." Andy let the boiling car into high and relaxed his grip on the wheel as they rolled down a gentle slope. Twenty minutes later the mud-splattered sedan came to rest before the Hotel Avalon, a battered frame structure, flung down slightly askew alongside the muddy street which

represented the "business section" of Avalon. At the clerk's desk Andy inquired for the sheriff. The clerk pointed a dirty finger toward the corner, where a rangy individual in flannel shirt and chaps sat tilted back against the wall, absorbed in a battered newspaper. Andy crossed the room and stood for a moment waiting the sheriff's pleasure. The dim light from a smoky oil lamp in a wall bracket cast flickering shadows across the floor behind him.

"Wal, mister, what can I do for you?"

Andy drew up a chair and leaned forward.

"I've come to give myself up. I've just killed two men."

"What th' — You killed two men? You don't look it."

"Well, I — I — did. They held me up down on the canyon road."

"Let's have your gun."

"I haven't any."

Disbelief grew on the sheriff's face. Stammeringly Andy told his story.

"Jim," called the sheriff across the room, "anybody take the canyon trail since noon?"

"Not a soul," answered the clerk laconically, looking up from the *Police Gazette*, which lay on the desk.

The sheriff turned back to Andy.

"You hear what he says. You must be dreamin'. You couldn't a knocked out two men with guns barchanded. You ain't big enough."

"It does seem like a dream," admitted Andy, "but it happened. I wouldn't be giving myself up if it hadn't."

The sheriff stiffened up and looked at him coldly.

"What are you — tryin' to get some free advertisin'?"

"No, I'm not," Andy barked angrily, rising from his chair. "You needn't believe me if you don't want to. I tell you that I killed two men — threw them into the canyon and put their car over after them. I'm offering to give myself up. If you won't go down and verify my story, that's up to you. I'll go on."

"Hold on. We'll go down. Better leave the woman here."

Andy made brief arrangements for Maria; the clerk promised to see that she was made comfortable.

"Let me go too," she protested, when Andy told her that he was going back with the sheriff to confirm his story.

"There won't be room."

The sheriff cranked up a battered roadster standing in the dim circle of light by the hotel steps, and they began the ascent in silence, the tall sheriff bowed over the diminutive wheel, the little Scotchman trembling beside him in an agony of apprehension. As they topped the rise, the sheriff stopped and alighted to put on a chain.

"Looks wet up here."

"It is," said Andy, "it poured guns all the way up."

"How far down —" began the sheriff.

"I don't know. It wasn't long after we passed a sign-board that said 'Avalon fourteen miles,' and it was right

on a sharp curve where a big ledge juttud into the road."

"Guess I know where yer mean. Road's narrer, and there ain't much wall."

"I should say not; not half enough for such a dangerous place."

"Road ain't used much by greenhorns. 'T ain't safe."

Half an hour passed, as the roadster crawled down the slippery roadbed, which seemed rougher and more washed-out than Andy remembered. Finally the car rounded a sharp curve, with brakes set and chain dragging.

"Here we are. Now le's see. Jest show me what happened."

"Yes, this is the place. I first stopped about here." Andy took his stand in the glare of the lights from the roadster. The sheriff produced a huge flashlight and walked slowly up and down the roadway.

"Whar'd you say their car went over?"

"About here."

"There ain't a mark to show it. Say, mister, what's the idea? There ain't been nobody killed here, nor no car put over this wall."

"The rain has washed the tracks all out."

"Looky here — what's your game, anyhow? There ain't nothin' to prove what you say. And besides, no car came up since yesterday on our side."

Andy shook his head slowly.

"I don't know what to say if you won't believe me. Couldn't we go farther down and get into the canyon?"



The sheriff eyed him with scorn.

"That would take weeks and a whole party, and nothing would be gained by it. The thing for you to do is to go back to your wife and let her take care of you."

## II

Back at the Hotel Avalon, Maria paced her room in agitation. She had refused to eat anything. Her mind seethed with conflicting emotions. The memory of the afternoon was terrible to her beyond belief. She trembled when she thought of it. And yet one ray of brightness illumined the whole scene for her. Her husband was brave. He was strong. Singlehanded he had slain two robbers. She had known him for forty years, but never before had he appeared in the rôle of knight. She had loved him always. But now — why, he was a hero! And how bravely he had given himself up!

A light flashed across the wall. She hurried to the window. The sheriff's roadster was just coming to a standstill outside.

Maria was waiting on the porch as Andy climbed stiffly down. She looked her question, but he shook his head dumbly in a puzzled way. The sheriff drew her aside. "I think, ma'am, that your husband needs care." He tapped his forehead significantly. "He's probably tired or somethin'. There ain't a trace to prove that yarn o' his."

"But it's true, every word of it."

For a long moment the sheriff looked into her earnest face. Then he looked away across the street.

"Wal," in a low tone, "I dunno what to make of it. Least said soonest mended. Pussonally, I don't believe a word of it."

Maria turned indignantly.

"Well, Andy, if we aren't needed here, let's go."

The sheriff leaned against the wall, lighting a cigarette.

Andy paused in doubt.

"Then you don't want —"

"No, I don't. Get on out of here."

Andy turned on his heel, descended the steps, and opened the door of the muddy sedan.

"Get in," he ordered briefly.

Maria obeyed in silence. Andy stepped on the starter. Suddenly she laid a hand on his arm.

"You haven't paid the clerk."

"I don't care if I haven't. I never was in such a crazy place in my life. They don't believe a thing I say. They probably would say my money was counterfeit. I wish I was at home selling soda crackers. What's that sign say?" For a brief moment the wavering headlights picked out the legend: *Hunter's Gap — 30 miles*. "We c'n make that tonight, and then we'll eat. I'm famished."

"Never mind, Andy. I know what happened. I know that you're the bravest man I ever knew."

Andy twisted uncomfortably in his seat. "Shucks, anybody'd 've done the same."

"They would not, Andy Stewart. If it hadn't been for you, we'd have been in the bottom of that canyon right now."

Seated in the tiny all-night lunchroom at the Gap, Andy and Maria ate ham and eggs in silence. Suddenly Andy looked up and nodded his head ever so slightly toward a group in the corner. Maria pricked up her ears.

"Bill back yet?" she heard.

"No," replied a speaker in the corner. "He figgered to make a couple o' hauls on the canyon road. Might be a week — he'll come home the other way."

Maria looked at Andy. Andy looked at Maria. They rose. Andy paid the bill. Outside Andy surveyed the sedan.

"Good for another stretch tonight, old girl?"

"I think," said Maria, "that we might just as well go on the rest of the night and sleep somewhere tomorrow."

Five minutes later a red tail light disappeared down the road that led from Hunter's Gap toward civilization.

### III

A week later Andrew Stewart — of Stewart and Hemingway, Groceries, Flour, Grain, and Feed — sat in the office of Lawyer Proctor, his legal adviser. His face was tanned beyond its usual appearance, but a deep wrinkle creased his forehead. For twenty minutes he talked earnestly. At first the lawyer's rotund face wore an expression of grave concern, but as Andy proceeded he began to smile and then to chuckle. The smile broadened to a grin; the chuckle deepened to a roar.

"And he wouldn't hold you? Oho, ho, ho, ho! That's a good one. I don't believe you did it myself, Andy." Lawyer Proctor wiped his eyes and then went into a fresh

paroxysm. "The sun must have touched your head a little. Oh, that is rich. Two of 'em singlehanded. Andy the hero! Haw, haw, haw! Ha, ha! "

"But, hang it, man, I tell you it's so."

"You couldn't make anybody believe it — not if they knew you, Andy. You'd best just run along and forget it."

That evening, as Maria was combing her back hair, Andy said briefly, "I talked with Proctor today. He didn't believe a word I said."

"Did you tell him what we heard at the Gap? "

Andy hesitated.

"N-o. I didn't."

"I'm glad of it. Don't you care what they say, Andy. I know that you're a brave man. You'll always be my hero." She put her arms around his neck. Andy looked at her doubtfully.

"Tell me one thing, Maria. If you hadn't been there, could you believe that that ever happened? "

Maria looked away for a moment.

"Don't ask me that, Andy. I was there, and I know what did happen."

"Got a big shipment of sugar today," said Andy briefly.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. What details make clear to you just how Mr. and Mrs. Stewart looked and felt at the beginning of the story? What kind of people are they?

2. Suppose they had been young and strong, brave and rich and handsome, what different effect would the story have had?
3. With what exciting event does the story open?
4. How do the robbers keep Andy's car from rolling back down the hill?
5. What do they take from Andy? What finally starts him into action?
6. How do you feel when the two men are pitched into the canyon?
7. How do Andy and his wife feel at this unexpected feat of Andy's?
8. Why is it so impossible for Andy to prove the truth of his story?
9. How does Maria feel about her husband's crime as she thinks over their adventure while waiting for him to see the sheriff?
10. Why do the pair refuse to stay at Avalon? Why do they leave Hunter's Gap?
11. What one detail does Andy keep secret from the lawyer?
12. Do you think Andy should have made any further attempt to give himself up?
13. Note how cleverly the story is told and how it is kept light and humorous throughout. What details can you mention that add humor to the story?
14. In what way is the situation of Andy and Maria the exact opposite of that of Vera in "The Open Window"?

*If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. The Most Exciting Thing That Ever Happened to Our Family
2. The Most Exciting Scene I Ever Saw in a Movie

*If You Want to Read*

"Professor Todd's Used Car," Leonard H. Robbins

"Mr. Travers's First Hunt," Richard Harding Davis

"The Ransom of Red Chief," O. Henry

"Miss Letitia's Profession," Lupton A. Wilkinson

"The Thirty-Thousand-Dollar Slap," Richard Washburn  
Child

"A Considerable Murder," Barry Pain

## HONOR OF THE COUNTY

by Walter D. Edmonds

IF you have ever owned a dog, you will be sure to like this story of a boy named Teddy and his dog Leonidas. Teddy finds himself in a tight place, and it is not altogether his fault. As you read the story, you will find yourself continually trying to decide what you would have done if you had been in Teddy's shoes.

YOU will especially enjoy the stories of Walter D. Edmonds if you happen to live in the Mohawk Valley in New York State. There he was born and there he still lives in the historic region that has served as the scene of many of his stories. He left the Mohawk Valley, however, to go to New England for his education, at St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, at the Choate School in Wallingford, Connecticut, and at Harvard University.

His short stories can be found in our leading magazines; his fine novel, *Drums along the Mohawk*, dealing with colonial days in the Mohawk Valley, was a best-seller a few years ago.



## HONOR OF THE COUNTY

I WAS a proud boy that morning, marching up the lane with the bull terrier at my heels. It was the spring of the year, and we were just up from New York, and a friend of my father's had given me the dog in March. I wanted to show him to Uncle Ledyard, and Doone, and Kathy; but particularly I wanted to show him to John Callant. John Callant, I thought, had known something of fighting dogs in the ring. But, as a matter of politeness, I went first to the big house.

"Stay there," I commanded the dog when we came to the office door, for he was well trained, and I wanted to show him off. He sat down with great dignity, a statue of white marble on the block of limestone, and pricked his ears toward the race track where John Callant had one of the colts in harness. His nose worked quietly. I don't believe he had ever been in really open country before.

I went into the office to find Uncle Ledyard going over the records of the horses Blue Dandy would be racing that August at Syracuse. But he dropped everything when he heard me and swung round on his chair and got up. His cold eyes smiled at me, and he said in his heavy voice, "How are you, Teddy? I heard you got back last night. How's your mother? And father?" And we went through the family politely and gravely. "Kathy will want to see you right away."

We went into the living-room and he roared for Kathy.

She entered from the dining-room, tall, graciously welcoming.

"Hello, Misther Teddy!" Mrs. Callant cried from the dining-room door. "How you've growed, to be sure!"

And I said with dignity, "Hello, Mrs. Callant." And she made me a sign which meant she had fried doughnuts that morning.

Then Doone came down from his bedroom with his overalls on, ready to take the horses onto the track; and we shook hands. I felt that I was back in my own country. But I was holding my breath with excitement too.

"It's time I was going out," Doone said. "Want to come along, Teddy?"

"I think I will," I said. And then Doone looked out of the window and saw the dog, and said, "Hello, there! Who's that?"

"Oh," I said, "that's my dog. He generally tags me around. And I left him outside. He stays where I tell him to."

"Bring him in," said Uncle Ledyard.

So I went to the office door and whistled, and the dog turned and gravely entered the house. He had great dignity, greeting Uncle Ledyard and Doone, and he put his nose gently into Kathy's lap.

"Oh, Teddy," she said. "He's a beauty! . . . You beautiful dog!"

His ears flattened a little and his tail waved gently. And Uncle Ledyard said, "He's a fine dog."

And Doone said, "He looks like a good one." And my heart was stuffed with pride.

"What's his name?" said Kathy.

"Leonidas," I said. "For the Spartan."

"That's a fine name for him," said Uncle Ledyard, and Kathy stroked the flat head and said, "My, he's handsome."

Then Artemis, Uncle Ledyard's Gordon setter, entered, and we watched the two dogs greet each other. Leonidas was dignified. He had a grand manner of reserve. And after a minute Artemis lost her stiffness, and we saw that they were friends.

We went out to the stable, Doone and I and Leonidas, and John Callant had Blue Dandy harnessed to the sulky, ready to go. He gave me a grin and held the reins while Doone got onto the seat, and we watched him from the doors as he jogged the horse out. Leonidas sat on the ramp, taking the sight of the great gray horse without comment.

"What do you think of him, John?" I asked.

John Callant spat and put his quid back in his cheek and squatted.

"Come here," he said to the dog.

Leonidas looked at me and I nodded proudly, and he came stiffly up to John and they looked at each other — the stubby small Irishman and the fine white dog with his pointed ears and his deep chest and his steady eyes. The dog posed as if he were on the show bench, and for a

moment John stared at him and whistled softly. Then he held out the back of his hand for the dog to sniff, which the dog did, delicately. Then he put his hand under the dog's jaw and drew him gently forward.

John's hands were broad and coarse and stub-fingered, but his touch was like a sculptor's on the white body. It was light and firm and sure with his knowledge of anatomy. The dog closed his eyes, and I saw his muscles playing under the touch.

"He's a brave, handsome beast," said John. "How old is he and where did you get him, Mистер Teddy?"

"He's four years old, and Mr. Freeman, a friend of Father's, gave him to me last winter," I said. "He's pedigreed."

"I've got hands and eyes," said John Callant, "so you needn't be telling me that, Mистер Teddy."

There was great respect in John's voice, as if ownership of Leonidas had made me a man's stature.

"There's blood in him to build the finest kingdom in the world," said John, the tone of his speech almost biblical. "And the bull terrier is the king of dogs, the way the lion is the king of beasts."

I squatted down beside him. The morning sun came in upon us, putting a gold gleam on the short, even white hairs of the dog's coat.

"He's a fighting dog," said John.

"He's got good manners," I said. "He hasn't been any trouble."

"He's no roaring brawler," said John. "But he's

fought. You needn't tell me, Misther Teddy. I've handled dogs in me time. He's got the lifting muscles at the back of his head like a bull. Pass your hands down his loin, back of mine. . . . Now over his neck. . . . And now take his jaw in the soft of your hand."

I did as he showed me, and I felt the hard muscles, half-asleep, barely stirring at the touch, and my hand thrilled.

"He could whip any dog in the county," said John, "and himself chewing tobacco and a treadmill tied to his tail."

I stiffened, and I looked at Leonidas with a new respect; for if John Callant said so much, I knew he meant it. The little man had told me stories of the dog fights on Long Island. And now and then he told stories of the small fights that took place in our valley. And I had heard Uncle Ledyard tell, too, about George Beirne, who was now a white-haired gentleman of sixty-five, but who in the days of his young manhood always had the best dog in the county. He would drive the roads with his dog tailing his cart and stop for any barnyard challenger. And if his own dog was whipped he would buy the winner from the farmer, or fight him if he wouldn't sell. But when Leonidas came into my hands, dog fighting had become an undercover business, and though some of the gentry, as John called them, sometimes attended, they kept the matter to themselves.

And looking at Leonidas now, standing so quietly, it was hard to imagine him in the fury of battle.

"I'm not going to fight him," I said to John Callant. "Father's set against dog-fighting."

"To be sure," said John. "You don't want him to be killing all the dogs around here."

I felt virtuously adult, but at the same time a shiver passed over me at his words.

Then Doone called to us from the track to come and hold the watch on Blue Dandy.

The spring went quietly with the voices of the peepers, and I left off fishing for trout and turned my attention to bass. Fishing, that summer, gave me new pleasure; for everywhere I went, Leonidas followed me.

He wasn't a dog given to roughhousing or any form of play. But he walked along beside me on the towpath and lay down in the grass where the bass wouldn't see him, never moving except for his knowledgeable eyes that followed the fly, and the occasional prick of his ears toward a rising fish.

But as soon as I struck, he would be on his feet, tense-bodied, his tail trembling stiff, and a low, soft, murmuring growl of excitement in his deep chest. And he would be as pleased as I was when the fish was landed.

Or we would depart over the meadows after woodchucks, which he liked better, and he would creep up toward the hole with me and lie flat beside me in the grass — and he had far more patience than I at the waiting game — and the moment the woodchuck put his head out and I shot, he would launch himself like a white spear.

But I think best of all, like myself, he enjoyed going over to Boyd House and watching the horses training, and lying around the cool stalls afterward while John Callant cleaned the horses of sweat with the smooth strokes of his stick. He seemed to feel at home in the hot horse smell, with the fresh, golden straw wadded between his forepaws for his chin to rest on; and John Callant would talk to us as if we were both friends of his.

He was a fine companion for a boy of thirteen, and he taught me that many things I had been afraid of were not things to fear at all.

Secret news in our valley travels in a strange way. Half-way through the haying, word came of the drummer and his dog. He hadn't even crossed the border of Oneida County, but one morning as John was sponging Blue Dandy's ears and nostrils, after he had turned in his first 2:07 heat for Doone, he said to me, "Jenkins, the new drummer for Loftus Company, has got a dog, Mither Teddy."

"Yes?" I said drowsily, for I was lying on my back under Blue Dandy's nose and he was playing with my hand with his tongue.

"Yes," said John Callant, through his hissing breath. "I've not heard much about him, but he's whipped the Belcher dog in Martinsburg."

I didn't answer.

"It means he's pretty good," said John Callant.

There was a rustle in the straw beside me, and Leonidas dropped his chin into my free hand.

"Well," I said, "I'll bet Leonidas could lick the stuffing out of him."

"I don't doubt it," said John. And the topic lapsed.

But a week later, Adam Fuess, Uncle Ledyard's farmer, dropped into the stable at noon with his after-dinner pipe in his teeth and said, "Well, John, I've just heard the drummer's dog has fixed another."

"Did you?" said John. "He seems to be pretty good."

"Henderson quit before his dog, I heard tell," said Adam. "It took three buckets to get them loose in time."

"He must be a holy terror," said John. And he didn't look at me. Neither man did. They were passing information back and forth.

"Leonidas," I said, annoyed, "could trim him easy."

"Could he?" asked Adam. "This drummer's dog is a trained fighter, I guess."

"John Callant says he could," I said.

John Callant bent down to buckle the belly tab of the blanket.

"He ought to," he said, "but I don't know."

"Of course he could," I said, and got up and walked over to the house for my own dinner.

And, as I walked, Leonidas came quietly along beside me, his clean head at my knee and his tail swaying gently. I looked down at him.

"You could lick the tar out of him, couldn't you?"

He raised his eyes and pricked his ears, but he didn't lose stride.



During the next week we heard of two dogs beaten, one in Lowville and one in Turin.

The mailman stopped at the barn on his way in and talked to Adam Fuess about it as Adam was cleaning out the manure, and Adam told John, and John told me.

"He killed the second one. They couldn't get him off," said John. "He must be the champion of the world."

The blood rose in my face.

"You said yourself Leonidas could beat him!" I cried.

"I said so," said John Callant. "But I don't know, Misther Teddy."

"You do know," I said. "I know, anyway."

"You can't ever tell," said John — "not outside of a ring, that is."

"I won't fight him," I said. "I don't need to. I know."

"Sure and he's your dog entirely," said John placatingly. "But it's a pity there isn't a dog in the valley to stand up to a city slicker."

I don't suppose they knew that they were working on me. To John it was the most natural thing in the world to put one good dog against another.

But he had planted his seed carefully the first time he saw the dog, and what he had said since had been no more than careful watering. If you had accused him of putting pressure on me, he would have been hurt. The dog was my dog, and he said so.

But the drummer reached Boonville on the first of August and made his contacts and got his orders, and John asked for the evening off, and I knew he was going over to the North American Bar to have a look at the dog. And in spite of myself, I turned up early next morning at Boyd House to hear what he was like.

John Callant was whistling a jig as he cleaned out the stalls and swept the floor. But the rhythm he put into it was speculative and sad.

"Hello, Misther Teddy," he said. "Hello, Leonidas, me boy. It's a fine morning."

I sat down on the water bucket and watched the stiff strokes of his broom. He wasn't paying any more attention to us that morning, and he worked harder than usual. He raised the chaff dust in clouds, and the horses had their heads over the doors with a look in their eyes that was very close to amusement.

"Shtand over, will ye, ye great bison!" he roared when Blue Dandy made a pass at his hat. I laughed. And he whirled round at me and the dog, who was by my feet, staring outdoors.

"Oh," said John Callant, "you're there, are you? I thought you had gone."

"Did you see the drummer's dog?" I asked.

"Yes, I saw him. And a fine animal he is too. But I forget, ye aren't interested in him."

"You know that's a lie," I said.

"Oh, it's a liar I am now! Well, you aren't the first one to miscall me on this place."

"That's another," I said.

John grinned and leaned on his broom.

"Well, there's plenty of others besides yourself, Mither Teddy."

"What was the dog like?"

"Sure and he's a bull terrier like yours," said John. "Only he has one-half a black saddle on his back and one black ear. And he's bigger than yours, and a handsome dog. I don't know that he's handsomer, for he has some scars. But the breeding's in him. I've got nothing against the dog," said John Callant, poking his broom at a straw, "but the drummer's not to my taste at all."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Oh, he's kind of a high and mighty cuss, with a mean look, like sweat in his eye. He shtood up to the bar among us and said it was too bad there wasn't anny more good dogs to be had in the counthry parts at all."

"He hasn't seen Leonidas," I said complacently.

John won me by saying, "I towld him that meself, Mither Teddy."

"What did he say to that?"

"Oh, he laughed. He said he was hearing that in considerable towns nowadays, but he wasn't getting a look at the dogs it was said of. He laughed a little, and the boys weren't feeling very friendly about it. 'Talk,' he says. 'I'm a man that knows me manners,' he says, 'but I'm not saying I'll believe it till I see the puppy and the money in his teeth,' he says. 'Well,' he says, 'I shup-

pose the cows are holding out on you bhoys and the money's hard to give away.' ”

John began to sweep again, slowly, and now and then casting a surreptitious glance at Leonidas.

“The throuble, according to the drummer, was that there wasn't anny more decent-bred dogs in the counthry parts,” said John. “Or if there was, their owners was too cowardly to let the brave dogs fight.”

“I'm not,” I said. “It's just I don't want to.”

“That's what I towld the drummer,” said John. “But he laughed at me, and some of the bhoys laughed too.”

“You know Leonidas could lick him!” I cried, feeling my fists get hot and the tears in my head.

“Sure, I do. And sometimes I've thought, why not let him? It's the honor of the county is in it,” said John, “and he's the grand dog, surely. But he isn't mine, afther all, and it isn't my business,” said John with a great air of virtue.

“John,” I said, “did the boys feel unhappy about it?”

“I wouldn't say yes or no,” said John carefully. “But they did mention your dog. They've most of them seen him. And they all say he's a grand dog and wished George Beirne had had him so he could fight, the way it used to be in the old days.”

“John,” I said, “I'll let him fight.”

And when I had said that, I knew I had been wanting to all along.

“Will you?” said John.

“Yes.”

John grinned and then grew serious.

"Misther Teddy," he said, and offered his hand, "you're a credit to the county."

I felt very proud as I shook John's hand; and I looked down at Leonidas, and I felt confident and excited.

John was practical.

"Of course, you can't handle him yourself, and it's no discredit to you, either, Misther Teddy. It takes years to make a man handle a dog properly. If you want, though, I'll handle him for you."

"Yes," I said, feeling my ignorance.

"He's in fine shape," said John. "Running the country all summer like the conquerer he is. I've got to go to Boonville on an errand for Miss Kathy, and I'll stop in to the bar and let the bhoys know. We'll make the arrangements and I'll tell you tomorrow morning."

"Do you think he'll win, John?" I asked, for it seemed a matter of form to me.

"Sure he will," said John. "I'll be having my own money on him. And so will the bhoys. But, Misther Teddy," he added, "I wouldn't be talking about it. It's you that's doing this for the honor of the county, but there's some wouldn't rightly understand."

"I won't," I said.

But walking home that afternoon with the white dog placidly keeping me company, I asked him if he was afraid, and if he minded, and I talked to him as if he understood every word. And perhaps he did. For there

was no fear in his walk, and I felt so proud of him that it was on the tip of my tongue twenty times to tell my mother that Leonidas was fighting for Oneida County against the drummer's dog of Loftus Company.

For three days I moved in what seemed a haze of glory. John Callant was making excursions at night and holding rendezvous with all the "bhoys" in our valley, and during the daytime one or another would turn up at Uncle Ledyard's stable for a word with John about this, or that, or the other, and the fulfillment of the simple errand would require them to step out back with Leonidas while I watched from the stable door, and then they would come in again, and the "bhoy" would shake hands with me solemnly and wish me and my dog luck; so that I felt that the days of youth had passed for me and that I had entered man's estate.

And the only thing that troubled me was the dignity of my dog in letting them feel his muscles or look at his teeth.

"He isn't a savage one with people," said John Callant. "He doesn't waste himself with growling. But I tell you he will fight, Adam. Just as a good horse is quiet in the barn."

They would nod and estimate weights and go away, and John Callant would tell me afterward that they had decided to bet this much or that much on my dog.

"The bhoys are all cheering for you, Mither Teddy.

You and the fine dog. It's a great thing for them, to be sure."

And he made it seem a great thing, in fact.

The wonder of it was that with all the greatness of the fact, no word of it got to my family. It was as if a palisade had been secretly erected round my father's place. Nor did any word of it get to Boyd House, for, as John said, Doone wasn't friendly to the fighting of dogs and he wasn't sure about Uncle Ledyard any more.

When he said that, my first doubt rose in me, but he smothered it by telling me that George Beirne had been approached and had been agreed on by the drummer and himself as referee.

"It isn't just a catch match," said John. "It's a great fight for the worrld. He's said he'd referee it, and he's coming down this morning to look at the dog."

George Beirne was Uncle Ledyard's cousin. He was almost as tall, but more slender, and his features were more finely cut. He looked very handsome walking into the barn in his immaculate muslin driving-coat, with his white hat tilted sidewise and his blue eyes shrewdly estimating the dog. As I watched I felt they were of a kind. If George Beirne was in it, I had nothing to worry about.

He passed his hand over the dog's back and down his legs.

"He's a magnificent specimen," he said. "Teddy, you're a stouthearted lad."

He shook hands, nodded at John, and walked out.

John gazed admiringly after him.

"He's one of the real gentry for you, Misther Teddy. Of course, he couldn't wish you luck, being the referee."

Before George Beirne left, he had a word alone with John Callant in the barn. And directly after, John came up to me as I sat on the rails of the track and said sidewise out of the corner of his mouth, "The fight's tomorrow night."

"Where, John?"

"In Bender's barn, at nine o'clock."

"Bender's?" I asked. For Bender ran a modern dairy on the Boonville road.

"The old barn," said John. "The one back down the cattle lane."

"Oh," I said. "The one with the hole in the roof."

John nodded.

I thought for a moment.

"John," I said, "how are you going to get Leonidas down?"

"Sure, I'll lead him along the lane and Adam Fuess's brother'll pick us up by the spring box."

"I'll meet you there," I said.

John's chewing froze in mid-swing.

"You're not coming, surely?"

"I'm coming, John."

"But your mother won't let you out."

"I'll say I'm coming over to Boyd House, or I want to go fishing, or something."



"Sure and if she finds out, I'll be murdered entirely," said John. "First her and then Misther Ledyard, not to mention Misther Doone."

"I don't care," I said. "I want to be there."

"You'd better be letting me take the dog," said John after a while. "I'm to handle him, annyway."

He had to run off then to take in Maidy, but in a minute he rejoined me while Doone was limbering Arrogance up.

"You can take Leonidas, John," I said, after a while.

"It's best," said John.

It was one of those hot nights when the mist lies close to the river bottom and the voices of the old bullfrogs are heavy. As I walked along the river by myself in the dark, the road seemed lonesome to me, and I noticed the shadows of stumps as I had not noticed them for a long time. I missed the white shape of Leonidas that should be walking evenly at my knee. And I was half-afraid to go on.

But then I began to think of him standing up for the county against the big city dog, and I felt that I had to go on. He had looked very dubious as I tied him to the wall ring in the empty box stall, and I had done my best to explain to him. When I looked over the wall a moment later he was sitting as I had tied him, very still, with his ears pointed, and his face to the door through which I had gone. Then he had become aware of me, and his tail had rustled the straw gently. He looked lonely as marble

there, and all the way home to my supper I seemed to feel him sitting there looking into the empty blankness above the stall wall. And when at last he heard feet, it would be John Callant's he heard—not mine. John Callant would take him away in the darkness, and I seemed to be able to see him, walking beside John's bowed legs, with his dignity upon him like white armor, unquestioning, affable, and strong with his own courage. The thought of that made me walk on more sturdily. John Callant would handle him right.

Luckily, my mother had gone away to Lyons Falls for dinner that evening, and she would not be back till past midnight. I had nothing to trouble me there, and my whole mind was on the dog.

When I came out of the woods, it was easier walking, for there was starlight on the mist, and shapes assumed their natural form. I could make out the cows grazing through the mist in the night pasture, the silver wet of dew on their horns, their muzzles glistening. By Hawkinsville I heard a rig rattle over the long bridge and knew that a wagon was going toward the fight. There were only men's voices aboard.

And I pressed on through the village, climbing the hill and crossing the canal at the top of it. A couple of boats had tied up in front of Amos's. I could see their cabin lights reflected on the water, and I heard Art Maybe's voice talking to the two boaters.

"Yeah," he was saying. "It's little Teddy Armond's

dog. John Callant says he's a dinger, but I've got my money on the drummer's. It stands to reason, a dog that wins in seven fights in a row must have the grit in him."

I never liked Art Maybe before, but I never liked him afterward.

"What do you say, Pete?" said one of the boaters. "Might as well have a look at it."

"Might as well," said the other.

"I'll give you a lift over," said Maybe; but I hurried on.

I was afraid. It was the first time it had occurred to me that there might be any doubt of the result. John Callant had said the boys all had their money on my dog, yet here was Art Maybe, notoriously close with cash, putting his money on the drummer's dog. Perhaps the others were all betting against Leonidas.

It seemed to me suddenly as if I were alone in the world, and that Leonidas was by himself, and we were separated, and the one thing we both needed was for both of us to get a sight of each other.

I ran for a while. But when a rig rattled up behind me, instead of hailing it, I climbed over the stone wall and lay down on the far side. A second wagon was overtaking the first, and the second driver hailed, "Hey, there!"

The first wagon hauled up.

"Where's the fight?"

The driver of the first wagon bawled back, "Bender's barn."

"Whereabouts is that?"

"I guess likely if you foller me you'll come pretty close to it."

The men laughed, and the second driver blew his nose and said, "I've come clear from Port Leyden and I feared I wasn't going to get there."

"Say, have you seen this drummer's dog fighting?"

"He's a slasher," said the Port Leyden man. "That's his name."

"Well," said the Hawkinsville man, "I've got a dollar on our dog and I've got another loose in here."

"That's fine," said the Port Leyden man. "It's going to get a lot looser. Not but what I'd like to see that drummer licked. But a man has to make money when he can. Boys, you ain't seen that slasher in action yet, but you're going to see a lot."

He laughed, and the men in the first wagon laughed, and one said, "I calculate it'll be a close mix. I ain't seen a real fight since Mr. Beirne was pitting his dogs. But John Callant says that Teddy Armond's dog is all right."

Their voices faded out ahead of me.

I got back into the road and ran.

I was afraid then I would be too late. I could see more rigs coming down on the corners from Boonville, and still more coming from Forestport. I was appalled to think how many rigs there were. I had thought that there would be only a small crowd, but the rigs and the men in them measured like hundreds against the sky. And as

I cut across Bender's day pasture, their voices came to me as they talked back and forth, laughing a little loosely. And Art Maybe's wagon with the two boaters in it trailed their hoarse voices in a boating song.

I felt wildly resentful of them all. I began to understand that it didn't mean fighting a dog for the honor of the county at all. For there was whisky in their voices; the sound of them was like a breath in the night sky, and the shapes of their heads above the hedges made ugly blots against the stars. And I ran with all my might.

Long before I reached Bender's old barn, I saw the lantern light making threads between the warped boards of the walls. Its old, sway-backed roof stood against the sky all alone. And it had the smell of old wood and must and cobwebs, the mingled smell of dry rot in the rafters and the moldy unsunned earth under the rotting cow-stable floor. It was as if the ancient walls had shut in a section of the world's air long ago when the oldest Bender built them, so long ago that the air had died there and become like a gray body. The voices of the gathered crowd were heavy against it.

As I stood on the far side of the barn by the old caved-in cellar hole of the first Bender house, I was afraid to go in. It seemed to me that a metamorphosis had taken place with the gathering of those men's voices. And though I could recognize a voice here and a voice there, I was not sure of knowing it, for the tones were rampant with the ease of men in their own company. The horses

hitched to the railings of the old barnyard lifted their heads from time to time and pointed their ears toward the barn.

I didn't want to be in among the men now. I was afraid of them. But I couldn't stop myself from going close to the walls. And finally I crept in through the cow door and stood under the mow floor.

Their feet were just over my head, but their voices now sounded far above me, and they echoed with a strange cavernlike quality in the hollow of the roof. I went down the length of the decaying wooden stanchions until I came to the hay drop, and there I found a series of cleats mounting a studding, ladderwise. I put my hands on one and found it solid, and I began to climb in the dark. I got to the top and found myself at the height of the eaves with the darkness of the roof peak over me and to my left the warm shine of the lanterns making a haze in the moted air. A straw rack ran from my hands out to the edge of the wagon run, and I climbed out on it and crawled along it on my belly, making no noise, until I could look down.

There must have been thirty or forty men clustered round an open space in the middle of the wagon run. The smoke from their pipes mounted lethargically past my face and drifted out into the shadows of the empty mows. The lanterns they carried showed me every detail of their faces, but even the faces I recognized I did not seem to know. Some were eager, some tense with the money involved, some inane from the whisky their wear-

ers had passed down; some were openly savage, and one or two were cool and taking stock. But all wore a strange masklike quality, as if it had been painted on by the lantern light. And their voices were lustful, and as I listened to the bandied estimations of the dogs and of the bets going one way and another, it seemed to me that I was losing my hold on the world and that the valley I lived in wasn't the Black River Valley I had always thought it was, but an alien place, and I a stranger in it.

For the voices had no meaning in my ears.

And then the crowd parted by the door, and George Beirne walked in. He was cool and neat in his light coat, and the lantern shone silver on his white hair, and he greeted the men he knew. He stood in the middle of the floor and examined the footing in the ring.

The wave of voices that had met him died, and men began moving their heads to see out of the door, and a man directly under me pulled out a thick silver watch and said, "It's just lacking a minute of nine," and I recognized the watch as Adam Fuess's and felt a brief wonder that I had not recognized him.

Then the men below me seemed to stiffen, and the quick, dry sound of their breathing infected me, and I felt my own back grow stiff as I lay on my belly. And the drummer walked in out of the dark. He walked in with the dog short-leashed and shook hands with George Beirne. He was a pasty-skinned man, with pinched city clothes and yellow shoes, and his eyes were black and sharp, and he had a cigarette stuck to his underlip, and

when he talked, the cigarette pointed his words like a small white finger.

His voice was flat. He said, "Any corner suits me, mister. Me and Slasher ain't interested in corners. All we want is a little dog," and he grinned thinly round the staring faces, and the cigarette drooped in his face, and a faint tremor vibrated the slender blue ribbon trailing from it.

He turned round, and I saw the dog.

He was a good bull terrier, but he had a tendency to stand out at the elbows too far. And he was coarser through the chest than Leonidas, and one of his ears was chewed and torn from an old fight, and there were thin welts of scars along his throat. But he faced the door with his feet braced and his good ear cocked, and the black spots on his hide lay dark as ink.

The heads of the men moved this way and that to see him, but he stood quite still, and after a moment we all waited again. And we did not hear John Callant arriving. We did not know he had come until the throat of the drummer's dog rippled and his low growl came out of him. Then his hair rose in a slow, short wave over his shoulders, and his feet seemed to plant themselves to the floor. Though he hadn't moved at all.

And I saw Leonidas. John Callant had a thong on him, but he walked in beside the little man coolly and stopped on the edge of the ring with the deliberate slowness of perfectly made muscles. A cry rose in my throat and hung in my mouth at the sight of him. He wasn't as



heavy as the other dog; he didn't look cocky. But the poised, white perfection of his body was clean as a new sword among those men.

John Callant walked forward to George Beirne and shook hands, and he nodded to the drummer, but the two dogs had forgotten the crowd, and their eyes saw only each other. And the crowd went through its inane moving of heads again, and its words were a hoarse murmuring in my ears, and I didn't hear at all what George Beirne was saying in his cool, clipped speech.

I could see only Leonidas. I saw him back slowly under John's urging until he was opposite the drummer's dog on the other side of the ring. I saw John Callant crouch over him, taking him between his knees. I saw John's hands, with the dirty, scarred nails, moving over his white body and loosening the thong around his neck. And I jumped up on the platform and shouted down on them to stop it.

Their faces turned toward me with a weird slowness, first one and then another and another, until all of them were staring up at me.

"I won't let him fight!" I cried.

I saw John's mouth gaping, and George Beirne came under the platform and looked up at me.

He was perfectly cool.

"I thought you'd agreed to this, Teddy."

"I did. But I don't want to now."

He said, "But you said you would, Teddy" — very quietly. "John Callant told me so."

"I did," I repeated, my voice a dry pain in my throat.  
"But I don't care. He's my dog."

The drummer looked up from his crouch and his lips sneered. The cigarette was short on his lip now, and he had to squint his eyes against the smoke.

"I might have known it," he said in his flat voice.  
"There ain't anybody here has got a decent dog with guts."

He laughed shortly.

A hoarse growl rose out of the men, and one or two I knew stepped out under me and looked up with George Beirne.

"Come on, Teddy," they said. "You go home and we'll look out for things."

"I won't!" I cried.

"You said you'd put him against the Slasher," they said.

"He's my dog!" I shouted desperately. "I won't let him!"

Joe Miller stepped up with the others. He was a hand on our own farm.

"I'm here, ain't I, Teddy?" he said. "You know me."

"I don't care who's here!" I felt the tears coming out of my eyes, but I couldn't stop them. "He won't fight!" I yelled.

"Look at him," said Joe Miller. "He ain't scared, Teddy."

And he pointed a bent hand at Leonidas.

The dog hadn't moved. His head might have dropped

a little, but his muzzle was pointed straight at the drummer's dog. And his throat fluttered gently.

"I don't care!" I shouted again, helplessly.

It was like a dream, myself battering against those red faces with my small, repeated words, and the faces rising at me, growing larger in my sight, great boulders of flesh I couldn't stop or even close my eyes against.

Then a man swore and another cried, "Hear that!"

And I heard a rig coming rapidly through the Bender yard and swinging into the cow lane. The horse was a trotter, and a fast one. The wheels bucketed over the stony piece and into the old barnyard, and I gave a shout as I saw Uncle Ledyard tramping up the ramp to the mow doors.

He shouldered the men aside until he stood in the middle of the ring beside George Beirne. He paid no attention to the men. He just glanced at the dogs, the drummer, and John, and he looked up at me with his eyes hard and his mouth shut tight in his beard, and he said to George Beirne, "What's going on, George?"

George Beirne said coolly, "A match has been made of Teddy's dog against this drummer's."

"I didn't know, Uncle Ledyard!" I cried.

Uncle Ledyard's face grew dark.

George Beirne said, "He gave permission," and shrugged his shoulders.

Uncle Ledyard turned on John Callant. "Did he?"

"Yes, your honor," said John, with terror all over him.

"Did you, Teddy?" Uncle Ledyard asked me quietly.

"Yes," I blubbered, "but I didn't know how it would be."

"Stop sniveling," Uncle Ledyard said harshly.

Then Doone came in with his face black with passion. He spoke shortly to Uncle Ledyard.

"Naturally, he didn't," he said. "Probably they've all been working on him. You did, John?"

"Indeed and I didn't," John Callant said indignantly. "Would I be corrupting a lad? I said it was his own dog all the time. Didn't I Misther Teddy?"

Uncle Ledyard looked up at me again.

"Yes," I said. "But I didn't know."

"George," said Uncle Ledyard, "I think you might have told me about it."

"I was promised to secrecy before I knew which dog it was," said George Beirne. "Besides, what of it, Ledyard?"

"It's a dirty business that no decent man would dirty his hands on," said Uncle Ledyard. "Persuading a child to put his pet up to be slaughtered."

"Slaughtered is it?" cried John Callant. "I'll bet my next month's salary he won't, Misther Ledyard!"

"Be damned to you, John, and keep your mouth shut till I speak to you!" roared Uncle Ledyard.

"Say," said the drummer in his flat voice, "is this a church benefit or a dog fight?"

"You keep quiet, too," said Uncle Ledyard, "if you want to get out of here with your hide whole."

But the crowd were beginning to get up their courage.

"How about our money?" they said.

Uncle Ledyard spoke to George Beirne.

"It's the biggest match there's been around here since the old days," said George Beirne. "There's a lot of money outside this crowd, Ledyard."

"Wait a minute, then," said Uncle Ledyard. "Teddy, jump down."

He held out his thick arms and I jumped and he caught me under the armpits.

"George," he said, "I put you on your honor not to let any fight start for five minutes. . . . Come with me, Teddy."

His big hand fell on my shoulder, and he walked me outdoors and round the barn out of hearing.

He sat down on an old beam and told me to sit beside him.

"Teddy," he said, "it's a bad business."

I could hear him breathing deeply beside me.

There was something comforting about the familiar scent of him, the strong tobacco smell and the flavor of his clean stables. I felt my nerves slipping. And I tried hard not to cry.

"They said it was for the honor of the county, Uncle Ledyard. It sounded fine. But I didn't know."

His breath roughened a moment. Then his thick arm passed over my shoulders.

"Teddy," he said quietly, "you ought to have known that if the honor of the county was involved, I'd be in it?"

"I didn't think."

"Lots of us don't think, Teddy. It makes us do mean, senseless things. If there was anything worth fighting for, don't you see we'd do the fighting ourselves? We don't ask our friends to go out and knock down a man that needs it, do we? And we don't send our dogs."

"I know."

"But, Teddy, you've said your dog would fight. You've given your word, and, right or wrong, a lot of men have taken it as good. Right or wrong, they've put money — many of them more than they can afford, probably — on this fight. I don't like it. I don't like it so much that I'd pay off all the money out of my own pocket if I could. But I think you'd be ashamed if I did that."

I nodded.

"I think, if you want to know, Teddy —"

"Yes," I said.

"I think you've got to put it through. It's the only thing to do now."

I drew in my breath miserably.

"All right, Uncle Ledyard."

"And I think you ought to tell them yourself. Tell them you've decided to go through with it, but that, win or lose, it's the last time you'll fight your dog in a match."

"I'm afraid, Uncle Ledyard."

He didn't speak, but put his hand on my shoulder again and pulled me up. We walked slowly up the dark ramp to the lighted door, and we walked side by side into the ring. I tried to speak, but I think Uncle Ledyard relented when he looked at me.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Armond has asked me to say to you that he has decided to let his dog fight, but win or lose, he'll not fight him again."

They cheered. They weren't cheering his speech. They were yelling for the fight they had been waiting for.

Uncle Ledyard leaned over me.

"Do you want to stay, Teddy?"

I felt sick, but his hand on my shoulder gave me a kind of courage, and I nodded.

"Good lad," he said, and drew me back to the edge of the ring. Doone came over to my other side and put his hand on my other shoulder. And I stood between them staring straight across the ring at Leonidas. There was a buzzing in my ears so that I didn't hear, and my eyes could not clearly follow what happened.

All I saw was his white shape walking out slowly from John's hands. Stiff-legged, he looked, as if he were walking on his toes. And his head was high.

And then his head dropped, and I saw the muscles swelling behind his ears, and his lip lifted from his teeth. There was a deep snarling, and I turned my eyes to see the other dog charge. He was more like a bull than a dog, with his overheavy chest and his crooked forelegs and his torn ear drooping like a broken horn. He came like a shot, and behind him I saw the drummer still crouched, his mouth a little open to show one gold front tooth, and his hands spread.

It was a trick some dogs learn, John told me after-

ward, for fighting inexperienced dogs, using the shoulder and his weight to knock the other off balance. And John held his breath, for a fight could be lost right there.

But I did not know that. All I saw was the savagery in the drummer's dog. The tips of froth along his lips and his strong teeth. And it seemed to me that Leonidas would be knocked over. I did not see how he turned, but his tail lifted like a sword, and when the drummer's dog whirled with claws rasping on the old plank floor, Leonidas was facing him, and in the same instant sprang. It seemed to me he fought cleanly and honestly, without tricks and without feinting. That time he missed his strike on the drummer's dog's throat, but his teeth caught just before the shoulder, and a thin ribbon of red slashed the other's white front. And the drummer's dog's teeth clicked sharply as he missed the hold he had expected.

And then they moved so fast my eyes could not follow them, but saw them in quick poses, held for an infinitesimal space in time, and lost again in the fluid interchange of posture. I saw the head of Leonidas come up, the ears clean and white and flat against his neck and a red streak against his shoulder and a gray patch of slaver on his back. And I saw him go down before a sudden charge and the flash of his feet as he kicked himself free and he came up under a second charge, looking white-hot, and a yellow fire in his eyes. He made no sound, though the drummer's dog had clipped his flank. But the drummer's dog snarled, like a dog singing to himself, and the men behind pushed against us and shouted.

But the drummer's dog was panting as he sprang again,



and I felt sick. My eyes swung desperately away, round the men's faces, and they were blurred red spots I could not see. And I closed my eyes and prayed I would not shame Uncle Ledyard and Doone by being sick.

And I heard a sudden desperate clutching of toenails in the rough boards, and the sudden letting out of breath from the men's throats, and then a great shout, and I opened my eyes and saw the drummer's dog rolling free and a great slash on him, and Leonidas was standing with his head down and his lips red. I saw his loins gather as he sprang, and their jaws clashed teeth to teeth like the meeting of buck's horns, and I looked round again.

I saw the drummer, still crouching, with his eyes slits and his mouth unsneering. And I saw George Beirne tense, with a kind of fire in his eyes, and a sadness, too, as if in his breast he felt the breath of long-lost times. And I saw John Callant squatting on his hams and his mouth grinning like a frog's.

I turned again to the dogs with my heart feeling bigger than my chest, and I saw Leonidas poised again, and his tail was up and his ears flat, and he sprang again.

The drummer's dog went down.

They made no sound now, for Leonidas had found the hold and he had the throat. The other dog kicked under him. But Leonidas' muscles made a hump in front of his shoulders and he bore him back.

George Beirne moved over to the drummer.

"He's beaten."

The drummer cursed.

"No, he ain't."

"He's beaten," said George Beirne. "He made a good fight."

"He's gone under," said the drummer. There was a strange kind of agony on his pasty face. "Let him lay."

"I'm going to break them," said George Beirne.

"For God's sake, then," said the drummer, and his knees trembled as he rose.

I did not see any more. I heard them sloshing water buckets over the dogs, and then Uncle Ledyard had me by the shoulder, and he marched me out of the barn. I looked back once. And Doone was coming behind me. He had Leonidas on leash, and the dog made a pale, fine marble at his side. He was walking quietly, and his dignity was on him.

When Uncle Ledyard boosted me into the rig, I was crying. I did not dare to look at Leonidas as Doone lifted him in beside me. I did not help him up on the seat. I only dimly felt the lurch of the wagon as Uncle Ledyard climbed on and then Doone. They sat together on the front seat and Doone turned Arrogance into the lane.

Leonidas got up on the seat beside me and lay down. His head was bent to lick the slash in his flank. He licked it quietly with his eyes closed.

Uncle Ledyard and Doone were silent.

And I looked at Leonidas, as he was not looking at me, and dared not touch him. And then he lifted his head to sniff the air running past us and put his head to my hand and licked it.

## SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

*What Do You Think?*

1. What qualities has Leonidas that make him different from dogs in other stories?
2. What kind of people are the characters in the story? What are their chief interests?
3. When Teddy first goes to his uncle's house, how does he show his pride in his dog?
4. How do you know that John Callant is experienced in handling dogs?
5. How do John Callant and the other men persuade Teddy to let Leonidas fight?
6. Which dog do you want to have win? Why?
7. On the way to the fight, why does Teddy change his opinion about fighting a dog for the honor of the county?
8. Through whose eyes do you see the fight? How clearly can you picture it?
9. How does Leonidas behave before the fight?
10. Why does Teddy shout down to the men to stop the fight?
11. Why are Doone and Mr. Ledyard angry when they arrive? Why are the other men angry?
12. What does Teddy mean by saying over and over, "I didn't know"?
13. If Mr. Ledyard thinks dog-fighting a bad business, why does he tell Teddy that he ought to let Leonidas fight? Do you think Mr. Ledyard was right?
14. Does the way Teddy and Leonidas act on the way home seem natural to you? What reason have you for your opinion?
15. Dog-fighting, we are told, has become an undercover business. Judging from the story, why do you think that this sport has been made illegal?

16. How does the name Leonidas fit this dog, and how does the title "The Honor of the County" fit the story? (Your teacher or the dictionary will tell you of the famous man after whom the dog was named.)

### *If You Want to Talk or Write*

#### *Suggestions Based on the Story*

1. The Drummer's Story (Imagine what he would say if he told another drummer his story of the fight.)
2. Uncle Ledyard's Story (He tells his wife, Kathy, his story of the fight.)
3. The Honor of the County as a Movie (Tell why you think this story would or would not make an interesting movie.)
4. A Radio Play Based on the Story (Use the conversation in the book and add words of your own. Assign parts, borrow a screen, and from behind it read your play to your classmates.)

#### *Suggestions Based on Your Own Experience*

1. A Fight I Couldn't Get Out Of (This fight need not be a physical fight. What other kinds of fights are there?)
2. The Worst Scrape I Ever Got Into
3. The Time I Found It Hard to Know What Was Right to Do

### *If You Want to Read*

*Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson (the first chapters, where the pirate persuades Jim Hawkins to keep watch for him — you will then probably want to finish the book)

"Dawgs," Charles Wright Gray, editor (stories about dogs)

"As a Dog Should," Charles Alexander

"Bull Dog," Max Brand

"Comet," Samuel Arthur Derieux

# THE GOOD RIVER

by Pearl Buck

HAVE you ever given money to the Red Cross to help the people in China or some other country ravaged by floods, famine, or war? Probably you have, and perhaps without understanding too clearly just what it would be like to live through such horrible experiences. In this quiet story Mrs. Buck makes such suffering and the part played by you and other Americans in contributing to the Red Cross come vividly to life.

PEARL BUCK learned to speak Chinese before she could speak English, and she knows China perhaps even better than she knows her native America. She was born in West Virginia, the daughter of two missionaries at home on leave. But when she was less than four months old, she was taken to China by her parents, and lived near the Yangtze River, the "Good River" of her story. She came back to this country to attend Randolph Macon Woman's College at Lynchburg, Virginia, and, later, Cornell University. Then she returned to China, where she taught many years in the universities in Nanking. For the last seven years, however, Mrs. Buck has made her home in the United States.

When in 1929 she wrote a story of Chinese life, called *East Wind — West Wind*, she had difficulty in finding an American publisher, for she was told that people were not interested in stories of China. But in 1931 another story of Chinese life, *The Good Earth*, won the Pulitzer Prize and was read far and wide over the land. This exciting story of the rise of a poor man in China was also made into a play and into an unusually fine moving picture. In 1938 Mrs. Buck was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

## THE GOOD RIVER

ALL her life Lan Ying had lived by the river with her father and her mother and her three younger brothers. The good river, they called it, because the river helped them in many ways, although its name was Yangtze, or Son of the Sea. In the spring the river brought swelling tides down from the snow melting on a hundred mountains where was its source. Many an hour had Lan Ying wondered about that source as she sat watching the fish net for her father. The river ran so wide and deep and yellow here at her feet, below the great net spread out on bamboo poles, that it seemed impossible to believe that it was ever a small stream somewhere, tumbling down some rocky cliff or running small and sluggish through some sandy desert. The only way she could realize it was to think of her baby brother, newly born three years ago, how small he was and how different from a man, and yet he, too, would grow out of that smallness, even as the river did, until it was so great it could be called truly a Son of the Sea.

Sitting by the fish net and waiting patiently until it was time to pull the rope that lifted it again, Lan Ying stared across the river. She could see the opposite shore only as a line of clear green. On misty mornings she could not see it at all, and she might have been sitting beside a muddy ocean. Nearly all her days did Lan Ying sit here beside the great river, and it had come now to mean some-

thing like a person to her. Her father was not a fisherman, but a farmer, and he planted rice and wheat on his land that edged the river and ran back inland an acre or two to the hillock where the hamlet was where they lived with half a dozen or so other families. They were all families of farmers like Lan Ying's father, but they all had nets tended, too, by children or by old grandfathers who had grown too old to work any more in the fields. Fish brought them in the extra pennies they could spend for the various holidays and for incense to burn before the gods, and for new clothes sometimes, and besides all this fish was good meat to eat, as well.

Lan Ying rose suddenly from the low, little bamboo stool where she sat and pulled with all her might at the rope. Up came the net slowly. Many a time there was nothing in it. Sometimes there were tiny fish that she had to scoop up with a long-handled dipper. Sometimes there was a big fish, once in several days or so. But there was none now, only a flash of tiny minnows. She stooped and dipped them up. Her mother would pin each one by a sliver of bamboo to a bit of matting on a board and dry them in the sun, and then they were salted and very good to eat with morning rice. She let the net down slowly and sat down once more.

Sometimes the days were very long sitting here alone. She came just after her breakfast and sat until noon, when she could go home again. But she liked it better than the other things the children must do on the river farms. She liked it better than herding the buffalo and sitting astride



its hard and hairy back all day, as her second brother did. She liked it better than herding the ducks in the little inlets from the river as her eldest brother did. Yes, she liked it because there was something very companionable about the moving river, about the boats that passed by her there, and the coveys of wild duck that floated down sometimes, great flocks of them, carried askew by the currents, and bobbing up and down on the water. There was always something to see. As for the boats, there was every kind, from small fishing sculls to the sailed junks with their painted eyes staring out at her from their bows. Once in many days low-set foreign craft came by and sometimes smoking steamers. She hated these and the river hated them, too. It always swelled into angry waves and rocked back and forth as they passed. Sometimes waves grew so high that the little fishing boats almost capsized, and the fishermen shouted loud curses at these foreign ships. Seeing the river angry like this, Lan Ying was angry, too, and ran out to hold her net steady. Still, oftentimes after these steamers passed there would be fish in her net, frightened there into commotion, and Lan Ying, when she saw the big silver bodies flopping in the bottom of the net, gave thanks to the river in her heart for sending her the big fish. It was a good river. It brought them food from the land and meat from its waters, and to Lan Ying, whose life was there beside it, it came to mean something like a god, and staring out over it day after day, she could read its face and catch its mood for the day.

It was, indeed, the only book she could read, for she

did not dream of going to school. In their hamlet there was no school, but she knew very well what a school was, because in the market town to which she and her mother went once a year there was a school. There were no pupils there on that day, for it was fair day, and school was out for the day, but she used to look curiously into the empty room as she passed and see the empty seats and the tables and pictures hung on the wall. The first time she had asked her mother,

“And what is it they do there?”

To this her mother said, “They learn the books there.”

Now Lan Ying had never seen a book, and so she asked with great curiosity, “Did you so learn when you were a child?”

“No, indeed!” said her mother loudly. “When did I ever have time for such stuff? I have had to work! It is only idle people who go to school — city people and such-like. It is true my father talked of sending my eldest brother to school for the looks of the thing. He was a proud man, and he thought it would look well to have one of the family who could read and write. But when my brother had gone three days he grew weary of so much sitting and begged to be sent no more and wept and pouted so that my father did not make him.”

Lan Ying pondered awhile longer on all this, and she asked again, “And do all city people learn books, even the girls?”

“I have heard it is the new fashion,” said her mother, shifting her load of cotton thread she had spun and now

brought to the fair to sell. "But what use it can be to a girl I do not know. She has but the same things to do, to cook and sew and spin and tend the net, and when she is wed she does the same things over again and bears her children, too. Books cannot help a woman." She went along more quickly, for the load on her back grew heavy, and Lan Ying hurried a little and then saw the dust on her new shoes and, stooping to brush them, forgot about books.

Nor did she think about them any more when she went back to the river. No, books had nothing to do with her life here by the good river. To lift the net and lower it again, to go home at evening and burn the grass fuel in the earthen oven upon which two iron caldrons were set and in which the rice was heated for their supper, and when they had eaten it with a bit of fish, if the river had been kind that day, to run with the bowls to the river's edge and rinse them there, and back again before the night was too dark, to creep into bed and lie and listen to the soft rush of the river among its reeds — this was all her life of every day. Only on a feast day or a fair day did it differ and then but for that one day.

It was a quiet life thus spent, but a very safe one. Sometimes Lan Ying heard her father say that in the market town where he went often to sell his cabbages and grain, he had heard of famine to the north because there had been no rains, and he would always add:

"You see how fine it is to dwell beside a good river! Whether it rains or not is nothing to us, who have only to

dip our buckets into the river and there is water for our fields. Why, this good river of ours brings us the water from a hundred valleys, and rains or none is nothing to us."

And when she heard this Lan Ying thought that theirs was surely the best life in the world, and life in the best place, where fields were always fruitful and willows always green and the reeds ever lush and deep for fuel, and everything came from this river. No, she would never move away from this river so long as she lived.

Yet there came a spring when the river changed. Who could have foreseen that the river would change? Year after year it had been the same until this year. Lan Ying, sitting beside the fish net, saw it change. It is true that every year it swelled with spring flood as it did now. The water ran high against the clay banks, but so it ever did in the spring. The yellow water curled in great wheels and tore at the banks, so that often a great clod would shudder and tear itself away from the land and sink, and the river licked it up triumphantly. Lan Ying's father came and moved the net away to an inlet's mouth, lest the bit of land upon which she sat might so sink and bear her away. For the first time in her life Lan Ying felt a little afraid of the river.

The time came for the river to go down, but it did not subside. Surely by now those upper snows were melted, for it was summer and the winds were hot, and the river ought to lie quiet and smooth beneath the bright skies. But it did not lie quiet. No, it tore on as though fed by

some secret and inexhaustible ocean. Boatmen who came down from the upper gorges, their craft buffeted by high rapids, told of torrents of rain, days and weeks of rain when the times for rain were past. The mountain streams and the lesser rivers thus fed all poured into the great river and kept it high and furious.

Lan Ying's father moved the net still farther up the inlet, and Lan Ying, when she was left alone, did not look over the river any more. No, she turned her back on it and looked over the fields. She was actually afraid of the river now.

For it was a cruel river. All during the hot summer months it rose, each day a foot, two feet. It crept over the rice fields where the half-grown grain stood; it covered the grain and took away the hope of harvest. It swelled into the canals and streams and flooded their banks. Stories came everywhere of dikes falling, of great walls of water rushing over deep, rich valleys, of men and women and children engulfed and swept away.

Lan Ying's father moved the net far back now, for the inlet was flooding its banks, too. Again and again he moved it back, cursing the river and muttering, "This river of ours has gone mad!"

At last there came a day when he tied the handle that lifted the net to one of the many willow trees that grew at the edge of the threshing floor that was the dooryard to Lan Ying's home. Yes, the water had risen as high as this, and the little hamlet of half a dozen earthen houses, thatched with straw, was on an island now, surrounded by

the yellow river water. They must all fish, for there could be no more farming.

Now it did not seem possible that the river could do more than this. At night Lan Ying could scarcely sleep, the water rushed so near the bed where she lay. At first she could not believe it would come nearer than this. But she saw the great fear in her father's eyes. It was true the water was rising nearer. Was it halfway across the threshing floor the day before yesterday? Yes, it was rising. In three days it would come into the house.

"We must go to the innermost dike," said Lan Ying's father. "Once before in my father's father's time I heard the river did this, and they had to go to the innermost dike, where the water does not come once in five generations. It is our curse that the time has fallen in our lifetime."

The youngest little boy began to howl in a loud voice, for he was suddenly afraid. So long as the roof of the house was over them and its walls about them it was only a strange thing to see the water everywhere and be like a ship perched above it thus. But when he heard they must go and live on a dike he could not bear it. Lan Ying's tears came in sympathy, and she drew him to her and pressed his face against her breast.

"But may I take my black goat?" he sobbed.

He had a black goat that he had taken as a kid for his own from the two or three goats his father kept.

"We will take all the goats," answered his father loudly, and when his wife said, "But how can we get

them across all the water?" he said simply, "We must, for we will have them as food."

On that very day, then, he took the door from its wooden hinge and lashed it together with the wooden beds and with the table, and he tied the rude raft to a little scull he owned, and upon the raft climbed Lan Ying and her mother and the little boys. The buffalo they tied to a rope and let it swim, and the ducks and four geese also. But the goats were put upon the raft. Just as they left the house the yellow dog came swimming after them, and Lan Ying cried, "Oh, my father, look! Lobo wants to come, too!"

But her father shook his head and rowed on. "No," he said, "Lobo must look after himself and seek his own food now, if he lives."

It seemed a cruel thing to Lan Ying; and the eldest boy shouted, "I will give him half my bowl of rice!"

Then did the father shout as though he were angry, "Rice? What rice? Can a flood grow rice?"

The children were all silent then, not understanding but afraid. They had never been without rice. At least the river had given them rice every year. When at last Lobo grew weary and swam more and more slowly and was farther and farther behind, there came a time when they could not see his yellow head against the yellow water.

Across the miles of water they came at last to the inner dike. It stood like a ridge against the sky, and it seemed a heaven of safety. Land, good dry land! Lan Ying's

father lashed his raft against a tree and they climbed ashore.

But there were many there before them. Along that ridge stood huts of mats and heaps of saved furniture, benches and tables and beds, and everywhere were people. For even this inner dike had not stood against the water. It had been a hundred years since it had been so attacked by the river, and in many places people had forgotten there could ever come such attack, and they had not kept the dike sound and whole. The river crashed its way through these weak places and swept behind even into the good lands behind the dike. The dike stood then still an island, and upon it clung these people from everywhere.

Not people only, but the wild beasts and the field rats and the snakes came to seek this bit of land, too. Where trees stood up out of the water, the snakes crawled up into them and hung there. At first the men battled with them and killed them and threw their dead bodies into the flood. But the snakes kept coming, and at last they let them be, unless there was one more dangerous than the others.

Through the summer and the autumn did Lan Ying live here with her family. The basket of rice they had brought was long since eaten. The buffalo, too, they killed at last and ate, and Lan Ying saw her father go and sit alone by the water when he had killed the beast, and when she went near him he shouted at her surlily; and her mother called her and said in a whisper, "Do not go near



him now. He is thinking how will he ever plow the land again with the buffalo gone."

"And how will he?" said Lan Ying, wondering.

"How, indeed!" said her mother grimly, hacking at the meat.

It did not seem possible it was the good river that had done all this. They had eaten the goats before the buffalo, and the little boy had not dared even to complain when he saw his pet kid gone. No, there was the grim winter ahead of them.

There came the day they knew must come, when no food was left. What then? Well, they had their fishing net left. But the river sent no large fish here into these stagnant flood waters. There were only shrimps here and crabs crawling slowly up the muddy banks. Among all the people no food was left. Each family kept closely to itself, hoarding its last bit, telling no one what was left. A few families had a little left, and they ate secretly in the darkness of the night lest they be forced to share. But even these slender stores were soon gone. There was nothing left then but the shrimps and the crabs. Nor was there fuel to burn that they could be cooked. They must be eaten raw. At first Lan Ying thought she could not — that she would rather starve. Her father said nothing, but he watched her and smiled a little grimly when, having starved a day, she picked from the heap of shrimps one that did not move.

"At least I will not eat them alive," she muttered.

Day passed after day. Winter drew near in chill winds

and sudden frosty nights. When it rained they were all drenched to the skin and huddled together like sheep. But it did not often rain, and the next day they could dry their garments in the sun. Lan Ying grew very thin, so thin she was always cold. But she looked at them all, and the boys were thin, too, and very silent. They never played. Only the eldest would move slowly to the water's edge when his father called to him to come and help to catch the day's shrimps. Lan Ying saw her mother's round face grow pale and hollow, and her hands that had been red and plump and dimpled at the knuckles were like a skeleton's hands. Still she was cheerful and she said often, "How fortunate are we to have even shrimps, and how fortunate that we are all strong enough to live!"

It was true that many had died among those who had come to the dike, so there was no crowd as there had been. No, there was plenty of room now for those who were left.

No boats ever passed by in these days. Lan Ying, sitting by habit and looking over the water, used to think of all the boats that had been wont to pass by in a day's time of fishing. It seemed another life. Had there been a time once not like this? It seemed they were the only people left in the world, a little handful of people perched upon a bit of land in the midst of a flood.

Sometimes the men talked together in faint tones. Not one of them had his old strong voice now. Each man talked as though he had been ill a long time. They talked of when the flood would abate and of what they would do

to find new beasts to pull their plows, and always Lan Ying's father would say somberly, "Well, I can harness myself to my plow, and my old woman will do it for once, I swear, but what is the good of plowing when there is no seed to put into the ground? Where shall we get our seed, having no grain?"

Lan Ying began to dream of boats coming. Surely somewhere there were people left in the world who had grain. Might not boats come? Every day she sat looking earnestly over the waters. If a boat would come, she thought, at least there would be a living man in it and they could call to him and say, "Save us who are here starving! We have eaten nothing but these raw shrimps for many days —"

Yes, even though he could do nothing he might go away and tell someone. A boat was the only hope. She began to pray to the river to send a boat. Every day she prayed, but no boat came. It is true that one day she saw on the horizon, where the yellow water was dark against the blue sky, the form of a small boat, but it passed into the sky and came no nearer.

Yet the sight heartened her. If there was this boat, might there not be others? She said timidly to her father, "If a boat should come —"

But he did not let her finish. He said sadly, "Child, and who knows we are here? No, we are at the mercy of the river."

She said no more, but she still looked steadfastly over the water.

Suddenly one day she saw, sharp and black against the sky, the shape of a boat. She watched it, saying nothing. She would wait lest it fade away again as that other boat had faded. But this boat did not fade. It grew larger, clearer, more near. She waited. At last it came near enough so that she could see in it two men. She went to her father then. He lay sleeping as all the men slept when they could, so that they might forget their gnawing bellies. She shook him, panting a little, plucking at his hand to waken him. She was very faint and too weak to cry aloud. He opened his eyes.

"There is a boat coming," she gasped.

Then he rose, fumbling and staggering in his feebleness, and peered out over the water. It was true there was a boat. It was true it came near. He pulled off his blue coat and waved it weakly, and his bare ribs stood forth like a skeleton's. The men in the boat shouted. But not one among those men on the land could answer, so feeble they were.

The boat came near. The men tied it to a tree and leaped up the bank. Lan Ying, staring at them, thought she had never seen such men as these, so fat, so fed. They were talking boisterously — what were they saying?

"Yes, we have food — yes, food for all! We have been searching for such as you! How long have you been here? Four months — heaven have pity! Here, eat this rice we brought cooked! Yes, yes, there is more! Here is wheat flour, too — no, not too fast — remember to eat a little at first and then a little more! "

Lan Ying stared as they dashed into the boat and brought back rice gruel and loaves of wheaten bread. She stretched out her hand without knowing what she did, and her breath came as fast as a spent animal's does. She did not know what she did except that she might have food at last — she must have food. One of the men gave her a piece of the loaf he tore off, and she sank her teeth into it, sitting down suddenly on the ground, forgetting everything except this bit of bread she held. So did they all and so did they eat, and when all had something the two men stood and looked away as if they could not bear to see this famished eating. No one spoke.

No, not one voice spoke, until suddenly one man said, having eaten awhile and as much as he dared, "Look at this bread, how white it is! I have never seen this wheat to make such white bread!"

Then they all looked, and it was true; the bread was white as snow. One of the men from the boat spoke, then, and he said, "It is bread made from wheat grown in a foreign country. They have heard what the river did and have sent us this flour."

Then they all looked at the bits of bread that were left, and men murmured over it how white and good it was, and it seemed the very best bread they had ever eaten. Lan Ying's father looked up, and he said suddenly, "I should like a bit of this wheat to plant in my land again when the flood goes down. I have no seed."

The other man answered heartily, "You shall have it — you shall all have it!"

He said it as easily as though he spoke to a child, for he did not know what it meant to these men who were farmers to be told they had seed to plant again. But Lan Ying was a farmer's daughter and she knew. She looked at her father secretly and saw he had turned his head away and was smiling fixedly, but his eyes were full of tears. She felt the tears knot together in her throat, too, and she rose and went to one of the men and plucked at his sleeve. He looked down at her and asked, "What is it, child?"

"The name —" she whispered, "what is the name of the country that has sent us this fair wheat?"

"America," he answered.

She crept away then and, unable to eat more, sat and held the precious bit of bread she had left and looked out over the water. She held it fast, although the men had promised them more. She felt suddenly faint and her head was swimming. She would eat more bread when she could — only a little at a time, though, this good bread! She looked out over the river and feared it no more. Good or bad, they had bread again. She murmured to herself, "I must not forget the name — America!"

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. How do Lan Ying and her brothers spend their days?
2. What are some of the many ways in which their life differs from yours?
3. What change takes place in the Good River?
4. What kind of life do Lan Ying and her family now live?

5. What changes does Lan Ying see in the way her father and mother and the other people look? How is she changed herself?
6. Why is it natural that she should be the first to see the boat?
7. What seems strangest to her in the appearance of the men in the boat?
8. What is unusual about the bread?
9. What brings the greatest joy to the farmers?
10. What do you think would be the attitude of these farmers toward America and Americans?
11. What might happen if sometime all nations should thus help one another instead of fighting?

*If You Want to Write*

1. One of the men in the boat writes a letter to his daughter in America, telling her of his part in the rescue of Lan Ying and her people.
2. A Comparison of My Life with Lan Ying's
3. The Time My Family Found a Friend in Need

*If You Want to Read*

Our Family, the daughters of Lin Yu Tang

"The Flood," Ting Ling

"The Kitchen Gods," Gulielma F. Alsop

"John the Six," Josephine W. Johnson

North to the Orient, Anne Morrow Lindbergh (the chapters telling of her husband's unsuccessful attempt to bring help to the sufferers from the flood along the Yangtze)





## BILLS PLAYABLE

by Jonathan Brooks

DO you like to listen to an exciting play-by-play account of a football game reported over the radio? A story of a game can be equally thrilling. Even though you may not understand all the fine points of football, you will find suspense in this story of the game played by Little Bill Brown, "the best team Jordan ever had since the days of '95, when it was customary to use eleven men instead of one."

JONATHAN BROOKS is the pen name of John Calvin Mellett, Middle Western newspaperman, writer, and university professor, who in his youth played football at Indiana University. He is the author of numerous magazine stories and novels; he has also written books for boys, including *Pigskin Soldier*, *Jimmy Makes the Varsity*, and *Varsity Jim*.

## BILLS PLAYABLE

"MY Gawd," said Nonpareil, "Look who's here! "

So I looked around from the lockers I was cleaning. There stood a hungry kid about twenty years old, maybe five feet eight, and weighing maybe a hundred and thirty-two pounds and a half at the outside. Just as I was about to tell him he'd missed the medical director's room and hit the football quarters, he spoke up.

"Are you Spike Shannon?" he asked, looking right at me with his two gray-blue eyes.

"Yes," I said, over my shoulder, turning back to the lockers.

"Letter for you," he said.

"Leave it," I said, being busy.

"I'll wait till you read it," he said. So I took it and read it.

Snohomish, Wash., September 10.

Dear Spike,

Here's my boy, Bill, that I told you about when I was back east six years ago. He's going to play football, and you might keep an eye on him for me. Guess he'll take care of himself all right, but I like to know he's in good hands.

Any news of '95?

Yours,  
BILL BROWN

I read it twice, and then I looked at the kid. Then I looked at the letter again. Sure enough it had the sig-

nature of Bill Brown, the one and only "Bloody Bill." And then I looked at the kid again. He was getting nervous.

"You're Little Bill, are you?" I asked him, giving him the up and down, careful. He didn't look any more like Bloody Bill than I look like the Fifth Symphony.

"Yes," he said, shifting his feet.

"You don't look much like your dad," I said, thinking what a shame it was.

"No," he said, grinning kind of foolish.

"Not so big, different build, different hair, different eyes, different mouth, different chin —"

"Yes," he said.

"How about your disposition?" I asked him. "We used to call your dad Bloody Bill."

"Guess I'm different there, too," he said, grinning again.

His dad was modest, like that. Aside from this resemblance there wasn't any, and I thought it was funny. But there was the letter, in Bloody Bill's handwriting, and there was his signature.

The upshot of it was I told Nonpareil to pick out a suit for this kid. He did, but he had a hard time finding things little enough. When Coach come in, I told him how Little Bill Brown, son of Bloody Bill Brown of '95, had come out of the West for to play football with us.

"He ain't overlarge," I said, "But his dad says he can take care of himself, and I'll take Bloody Bill's word for anything from headgear to cleats."

Then I told him who and what Bloody Bill was. Coach has only been with us seven years and don't know our Alma Mater like he knows his own Alma Mater. Bloody Bill played every position on the great ninety-fivers and was named on the All-Western in four different places. Coach took some interest in the kid when I told him that.

Now, Coach is queer, but he is a bear in his line and the directors put up with him. The boys are crazy about him, after they get used to him. As a rule, they are so wild to play that they look at him with gratitude when he cusses them and thank him for a kick. He expects just that sort of half-baked awe, especially from the freshmen. And he's peevish if he doesn't get it.

Coach called Little Bill out from behind the lockers where he was trying to make a pair of thirty-eight-waist pants stay up around his thirty waist.

"Name's Brown?" asked Coach.

"Yes," said the boy.

"Ever play football?"

"Some."

"What'd you play?" asked Coach, sizing him up.

"Quarter."

"What can you do, run, throw, kick — what?"

"Dodge a little," said the boy. "And I can catch a ball."

"Oh, you can?" Coach said, sarcastic. "Well, we'll let you run back punts this afternoon while the ends and backs are going down."

And Coach was through with him. I could see, plain

enough, that Coach didn't like the kid. Coach's way had kind of made the boy sore, and he quit being nervous, the way he was when he talked to me. Little Bill stood right up square on his two toed-in feet and looked straight at Coach.

In the second place, Coach hadn't had a quarterback in three years and was just about ready to believe there wasn't any such thing. He'd got himself into such a frazzle that when anybody admitted he'd ever played quarter, Coach nearly drove him crazy. I could tell another story about Little Bill and Coach, but I won't. Except just this much.

Eckie was down from Chicago that day on his trip around the conference, looking over the teams and writing a bunch of dope for his paper. We had a game two weeks off with Eckie's old team, and so Coach decided he wouldn't show Eckie anything. First he had the boys fall on the ball, then hit the dummy, buck the machine, and finally go down on punts.

Powers was kicking and everybody was going down, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in threes, and sometimes in fours. Little Bill, even if it was his first day out, had to do all the running back. Coach didn't want to show Eckie how weak his regular defensive fullback, Rabbit, was.

So Powers was booting 'em, and Little Bill was ketching 'em, and Eckie was watching.

It seemed that Little Bill told the truth when he admitted to Coach that he could ketch a ball and dodge a

little. He could certainly do them two things a little. He looked kind of awkward, and he hadn't much speed. His straight-arm, what there was of it, didn't amount to anything. But he had the smoothest way of weaving his hips and shifting his feet just when he was about to be hit that I ever saw. And I've seen 'em all since '95.

For thirty minutes this kid caught Powers' punts, the high, lazy, deceivin' spirals, the low, twistin' drives, and the ugly end-over-end hoists. He took 'em all alike and fumbled nary one. He held every ball he got his hands on, and he got his hands on nearly all of them. And after he got 'em, he ran 'em back, coolly, ca'm and unconcerned as if he was deliverin' sausage at three dollars a week.

Just one time in all that forty minutes, he got thrown. That was when Johnny and Robbins, our regular ends, got down under a high one he had to wait for and hit him before he started. Other fellows hit him often enough, but couldn't dump him or hold him. He was always just inside their tackles, or just slipping out. All this in spite of having shoes that were a mile too big and pants big enough for two of him.

Coach went crazy. He yelled and drove at the fellows going down for missing a skinny little kid that couldn't outrun his own mother. Finally he went down once himself just to show them how and missed the boy by four feet. Then he went back and deviled the life out of Powers because the kid was ketching and holding everything Powers sent down. Powers tried harder than ever.

Finally Coach called it off, but was so mad he made the whole squad run a half-mile further than usual before coming into the showers. When the boy came in, all tuckered out, Coach said to him, kinda sarcastic:

"I didn't mean for you to show up the whole squad, Little Bill Ballhawk."

It wouldn't have made any difference if the boy had known Coach and just grinned. He thought he ought to answer, being spoken to.

"I didn't mean to, either," he said. "I was just looking out for myself."

"You cert'n'y was," Coach rumbled. Right there Coach multiplied his dislike for Little Bill by three.

Next day Eckie's paper printed a column harping on the fact we couldn't tackle. Eckie kidded about it, saying Coach seemed to have instilled a fondness for feet in the boys. They never left 'em when they tried to tackle, he said. He went on and advised everybody to play a wide-open running game against us, because we couldn't tackle, and because Powers was kicking better'n ever, and because we had a kid that could run back any kick to where it started from, and then some. Meaning Little Bill. When Coach saw that, he lost his mind and all notion of warming up to the kid.

Everybody we played that year played against us just like Eckie said, and we had the roughest year I ever saw. It's bad enough when a team finds your weakness in a game, but when they work for weeks knowing your weakness beforehand, it's bloody murder. We were lucky to



win three games, lose three, and tie one. Coach blamed it all on Little Bill and nagged and deviled him something awful.

Coach was a wizard with words. He could make the biggest husky in the squad lay down on the gym floor and roll over. I've seen 180-pounders that wouldn't take a word off Tom Sharkey in his own yard go out on the sidelines and cry at something Coach said. I won't try to tell you what he said. Anyway, it wasn't so much what he said as it was the way he had of snarling it out.

In all the years I saw him, the only boy he couldn't faze was Little Bill Brown. The more Coach raked him, the ca'mer Little Bill played. He took every call-down to mean he might lose his job, and then where would the wife and seven children be? So he stuck right to his knittin' and let Coach's hot stuff run right off his back like water when he was covered with goose grease. It looked like a matter of business with Little Bill.

We played a little college a practice game after we'd been working six days, and Little Bill was at quarter in the last period. He did right well — for him. Ran back one kickoff for a touchdown and another so close he sent Powers over on first down. That made the rah-rahs crazy about him.

Next week we went to Chicago and got walloped something awful, mostly because, as Eckie had said, we couldn't tackle. Partly, too, because Rabbit, at quarter, kept dropping punts and losing them. He fumbled no less than nine, and those glue-fingered M'roons grabbed

seven. Two of their touchdowns come direct from Rabbit's fumbles. Another one followed after he'd practically thrown the ball right into big Crawley's hands.

"Little Bill, Little Bill, give us Little Bill," yelled our crowd. "Let him in, he'll hold that old ball," they yelled.

Coach didn't let him, but back home on Monday he put him in at quarter awhile. Little Bill outplayed, or I should say outworked, Rabbit, and outmaneuvered Coach all the rest of the season. He went at it as steady as a clock, and just about as emotional. Running back punts didn't excite him any more than drivin' a team on his father's township.

"All in the day's work," you could just about hear him say when he dived for an extra-hard tackle. No fiendish fun, like old Bloody Bill used to have.

It certainly wasn't his fault we didn't win the rest of our games. Ill'noy beat us because Seiler could drop-kick further than he could punt. He drop-kicked on third down from his own side of the field all afternoon because we managed to stop 'em dead when they tried to carry the ball. When a guy drop-kicks twelve times in one game, he's bound to get one good, and Seiler did. I ain't takin' it away from him at that. Little Bill couldn't run back drop-kicks that was always either going out of bounds or rolling twenty yards over the line. So we lose to Ill'noy by one drop-kick.

It wasn't Little Bill's fault, either, that we lost to Wisconsin, three touchdowns to one. They was so big they

just couldn't be stopped. At that Little Bill ought to have had another touchdown besides the one he got. The referee said he ran outside, but I know he didn't, by six inches. If he had he would have kicked over my water bucket.

We did take Northwestern over, and we hammered Ohio to death. Little Bill did most of the work, too. Their ends were all so rotten that even our pony halfbacks could handle 'em long enough to let Little Bill start.

So we came to the last game of the season. If we have any game more important than any other, it is this last game on Thanksgiving Day. The fellows would rather win it than the rest, but at that we don't go much on big annual classic games like they do over East. Nobody ever heard of saving one man from Chicago to play against Ill'noy, and all that stuff. He plays against the M'roons, and if he gets hurt, then somebody else plays against the Suckers. Whoever plays puts a little more fire into the Thanksgiving scrap than any other game of the year. It is the game of the season.

"Better come and see Little Bill play," I wrote out to Snohomish. "He's a better man than his dad ever dared to be. You never saw a quarter like him in your life, and neither did I until I saw him."

Didn't tell Bloody Bill much, because neither of us ever sends long letters. We write every year or so and keep in purty close touch.

"Guess I will," he wrote back to me. "Don't tell Bill I'm coming. It might make him nervous. What's the

idea of him playing quarter? Is it the new rules, or what?

"Save me a seat," he said. And that was all he wrote.

I had to laugh about him or anything else making Little Bill nervous. It was funny, too, about him asking why Little Bill played quarter. He certainly wasn't big enough to play anything else except water boy. But then a father is that way, I guess. Expects his kid to do whatever he could do.

I put it down to that. Besides, Bloody Bill had only seen one game back East since he left in '95, and believe me, the game is certainly different. He'd tell you the game ain't what it was. And he'd tell you about the time he blame near broke his neck hitting the line head-on, because a guard on the other team had a scoop shovel under his sweater. Them was the good old days, he'd tell you, and the game's softer now. And so on. At that it musta been kinda hard on a man that'd played guard, tackle, center, and fullback to have a son grow up to be a quarter.

But I knew Bloody Bill would forget all that stuff once he saw Little Bill handlin' the team and hawkin' the ball. Little Bill just naturally could do both them things, even if he didn't do 'em the way Coach liked 'em done.

"Bill," Coach would say after almost any game, "you played a nice game today, and we did as well as could be expected. That was a good run of yours in the third quarter, and you did the right thing in asking Powers to kick on second down sometimes, as well as on third or

fourth. Kept 'em guessing. But why in the name of all that's pious do you pound the team to pieces the way you do? Call an open play once in a while, call a forward pass, try a double shift or something. You play straight football and kill off half the team."

"They'd oughta be killed," Little Bill would speak right up. "They can't remember signals for the good stuff, and if they do they fall all over each other. That's why I work the straight stuff," he'd say.

Then there'd be a pause. If Coach had been specially mean to Little Bill the past week, Little Bill would rub it in.

"Besides," he'd say, "we missed only three first downs."

That'd wind up the case, but on Monday Coach would find more fault with Little Bill. The kid just couldn't please him. For one thing, Little Bill didn't get mad. I never saw him mad in any game or in any kind of a run-in with Coach. Sometimes it seemed like he kept his temper to keep his job, as I said awhile ago.

Red Harkness got an awful good laugh one time when Little Bill had taken time out in a hard game, to save our two baby halfbacks. Red, who was yell-leader, ran out to see what was the matter. I was putting a piece of ice on Little Bill's neck just to make the officials give us plenty of time. Red saw nothing was wrong; so he ran back with his megaphone and yelled to the crowd:

"Nothing wrong with Little Bill. They got some ice they wanta cool off, and they're putting it on his neck."

He was just that cool in a game. Huff told me one time he never saw so much liquid air running around loose in one bunch in all his life.

"He'd melt in a refrigerator," he said.

Coach kept on trying to rile him up. He's old-fashioned, Coach is, and thinks a man has got to get mad and het up before he can get much done in the way of damage. Little Bill never warmed up to anything, no more to me for being good to him than against Coach for being mean. The prospect of the last game didn't get him overhet either. It had everybody else except Powers, including Coach, laying awake nights and skimping their meals. Little Bill plugged right along at his job.

"With one fullback and one quarterback," Coach would wail to me, "and no halves or ends, and just a middlin' line, we've got to play that bunch that ain't got a weak spot," he'd say. "They play like a machine," he'd say. "Just like a machine in good order. They've beaten everything this year just by rolling along like a thrashing machine."

"Cheer up," I'd say. "Maybe it won't be so bad."

"Bad," he'd say. "Bad? Not be so bad, when I can't even get this bunch here mad? I've kicked 'em, and cussed 'em. I've done everything I know how. And it don't even ruffle their tempers — they just get flustered a little. Powers might get mad in a game, but Little Bill — ! Fat chance we've got."

I didn't say anything much, because what can a trainer say to his boss? Of course, I'm a graduate, and I wear

the letter myself, and I have some privileges. But he was right about it. I kept hoping that Powers and Little Bill could pull it out somehow. Maybe Powers could kick the ball so far and so high the other fellows couldn't do much with it. And maybe when they kicked, Little Bill would run 'em to death.

Day before the game I got a telegram from Bloody Bill. He'd missed a train at Denver or Butte or somewhere and was going to be late getting in, he said.

"Leave ticket box office," he wired. "Will arrive 3.15 train see you after game."

This telegram gave me an idea, and I came near telling Little Bill his dad was coming, just to see if it wouldn't wake him up and make him let out an extra notch. I thought about it a long time before I finally decided it might spoil his game, and anyhow I ought to keep Bloody Bill's surprise for him.

Next day was just like a million others. Old timers trying to break into the dressing room. A dozen of them who had heard Bloody Bill was coming, looking for him. I don't know how it got out. I hadn't told it. Bunches of fresh kids from frat houses running errands for players. Two alumni doctors trying to get places on the sidelines. Scads of old players looking for Coach. And so on. I and Nonpareil had our hands full getting ready for the game, even with the windows down and the doors locked.

One o'clock came and time for the boys to report to Coach for skull practice. He went over all the signals, told 'em over again everything he'd told 'em all season.

"Powers, remember and kick 'em high and faraway early in the game and low and shooting, late," he said.

Little Bill showed up cool as a mint julep in January.

"For the love of limbo, Little Bill, let out an extra link, will you?" he asked the kid.

"Yes, sir," said Little Bill, casual, like that.

His offhand way of saying it got Coach mad, and he lit into Little Bill and the rest of the bunch, dressing 'em up and down, undressing 'em and skinning 'em alive. It was the worst I'd ever heard, even from Coach. He kept it up until it was so late the boys had to dress in a hurry and run out to the field. The other team was already limbered up.

Then he chased 'em along while he had 'em excited, all but Little Bill. He run Powers out for the tossup while the other boys were running signals. That way he got the game started while they were still hot. A running start sometimes wins a game where nothing else will.

No use to waste time telling you about the Jordan boys on one stand and the Tippecanoe on the other, rooting their heads off, waving banners, and begging the band to hit up just one more verse. You've seen yell-leaders trying to work in all the yells the rooters want. All that is reporters' stuff — the governors of the two great states represented by the two splendid universities contending today on the gridiron, present in boxes on opposite sides of the field, et cetera. You've seen it dozens of times, and you've read about it more than that. I'm telling you about Little Bill.



I looked around for Bloody Bill in the Jordan stands, but I couldn't see him. After the game started I didn't have time to look for him.

Coach trotted our boys out to grab an early start, and they did. Or rather, Little Bill did. Coach had told Powers to receive the kick if he won the toss, and he did. Coach was hoping Tippecanoe would go crazy and kick the ball to Little Bill, and then maybe Little Bill would go crazy and run all the way back with it.

Once a year or so a coach's strategy works out, and this time Coach's did. All except the part about Little Bill going crazy. The Tippecanoe guy booted the ball off his little dirt pile, sending it high up and way down the field right at Little Bill, under the goal posts. Maybe I haven't mentioned it, but Little Bill was the only man the Middle West ever saw that could take his eyes off the ball, size up his field, then spot the pigskin and hold it. He did it on that kick.

There may have been prettier runs in the nickel novels or the books for boys, but I don't believe it. There certainly never was a prettier one on a football field. I've seen Eckie and Willie Heston, in my time. One year I saw Mahan and Oliphant and Barrett, and I saw Harley, too, but none of them ever pulled what Little Bill did that day.

He just stood there, matter of fact as if he was at the pay window signing his envelope, and waited for the ball. When it came, he hooked it and was off, all at once. He never could run very fast, and he didn't run very fast this

time. He set off a little to the right of center and then headed parallel to the sideline, straight at the Tippecanoe left guard and tackle, coming for him in a team.

I thought it was good night, because he usually circled out and around, cutting back in when he had to.

"Look at that dashed and hyphened little fool," growled Coach. "Right into their arms."

But Little Bill knew what he was doing. He could see better from where he was than we could from the sideline. Seems the Tippecanoe eleven, good machine that it was, had shown a weakness at the jump. The right side of the line came down in one section, ahead of the left, running in another section. Between 'em was a five-yard gap. So Little Bill drove straight at the left side until he reached the gap, and then wheeled in between the two halves of Tippecanoe. It was only a step to the middle of the field, and nobody was left between Little Bill and the goal but Tippecanoe's kickoff man and the quarterback.

Jordan's bunch behaved funny on the kickoff that year. Nearly everybody slid past his man and went down the field a piece to reconnoiter around some. Four of them had done it this time, the others being unlucky and getting dumped. These four all headed for the quarter, who weighed at least 146 pounds. They lit on him at once and sat on him. Little Bill ca'mly stepped around the man who had kicked off, him being a tackle weighing about a tenth of a ton.

Then, as Little Bill hiked along for the touchdown, Jordan rooters got up and counted the yard lines off for

him. Man, it was beautiful. The kid wasn't touched, not\*once! Little Bill brought out the ball, and Powers kicked the goal. "Jordan 7, Tippecanoe 0," was the flash that went to Chicago papers.

Pandemonium did what it always does in the bleachers. One old gray-headed alumni got up and nominated Little Bill for President. Subs on the bench threw their blankets all over the place.

As far as the scoring was concerned, that game ended right there. This is no sensational yarn about a hero and four touchdowns in the last minute of play. But as far as the playing went, the game had only just started. The periods were each of them nine years long. Our Jordan boys got excited and played the rest of the first quarter a whole lot better than they knew. The ball worked back and forth from one thirty-yard line to the other. In the second quarter the same stunt started again, but Tippecanoe was most awful precise and certain about their part of the program.

After they'd been seesawing back and forth a year or so, our bunch began to get tired and take time out. Then they began to wonder whether they were so hot after all. They must have decided they were the worst players in the world, for that was the way they acted.

Powers, backing up the line, and Little Bill, at defensive full, held 'em off awhile. But Powers couldn't play defensive quarter and make all the tackles for both the halfbacks besides. He let three men get away for Little Bill to dump. Little Bill cut 'em off all right, but each

time they had grabbed sixteen or eighteen yards. We saw it couldn't last; Tippecanoe was sure to come through, barrin' a miracle. The half ended with Tippecanoe on our seven-yard line for first down.

Jordan rooters took a long, long breath, which they hadn't done since Little Bill's run. They sat humped up on the seats, wishing the funeral would hurry up and pass. Tippecanoe rooters, sure of winning, whooped and yelled across the field.

That intermission was most murderously short, but I and Nonpareil did the best we could, what with Coach givin' his harangue and the boys wantin' to lay down and go to sleep. Nonpareil and the subs swabbed off the bunch, and I patched up a couple of cuts. I gave all of them some of my old speed oil externally and used it on three of them internally. It's so hot outside that the boys run themselves to death trying to work up a breeze to cool 'em off. And inside, a little of it would make the meekest substitute want to fight the whole Tippecanoe bunch. I'd use it more, but they're strong for Prohibition around here.

The last thing I did before we went back to the field was to go over Little Bill, careful. I always did this between halves, him being so little and scrawny and needin' to be freshened up some. This time I got an idea how I might stir him up more than Coach had been able to.

"You'll wanta make an extra good showing this half," I said, when I had him on the rubbing-table.

"Yes," he said. "Loosen up that ankle, will yuh, Spike?"

"Yes," I said, grabbing the ankle. "Somebody's here to see you play," I said, though I hadn't seen Bloody Bill.

"Yes," he said, "I guess there's several here. Not so hard on the ankle."

"Yes," I said, "but this is somebody special."

"I heard the governor was here," he said. "But I didn't suppose he came to see me particular."

"YOUR governor's here," I said, shifting to his chest so I could see how he'd take it.

"What d'yuh mean, MY governor?" he said, kinda wilting for a minute. He shriveled right up under my hands, and his heart seemed to quit pounding. He acted like he broke his leg and I'd just jerked it into place for him. You've seen fellows act like that — kinda halfway go off.

I could see he was su'prised.

"Your father," I said. "Bloody Bill Brown," I said. "The best football player that ever got a rubdown in this here room," I said.

Little Bill began to get hot. All the blood in him, which wasn't much at that, seemed to hunt up some place on the surface to get cooled off. Like he had a fever.

"M' father — he ain't — I ain't — aw, whatcha givin' me?"

"Fact," I said.

Little Bill rolled over then and began muttering to himself. I had to hustle with him and couldn't make out all

he was sayin', but I did ketch "Dirty big coward," "Show him," and "All th' way from Washington state."

I didn't get the coward part, but the last two made me think my scheme had worked. If Little Bill was mad, fine business. And when Coach called us out, Little Bill was cryin' as he went.

Starting the second half the boys braced for a minute. Then all of them forgot what Coach had said and remembered who they were. They deeded the game to Powers and Little Bill and then laid down and died. Tippecanoe got the steam roller started again, and would have had a touchdown when the quarter was about nine months old and had been going about four minutes, except for Powers.

Tippecanoe needed two yards for a first down, and called a fine split interference play over their right tackle, on our five-yard line. Their guard and tackle tore our line open like paper, and the fullback shot into the hole like one of them forty-two centimeter shells. Powers dove at him head on, took his knees, and stacked him. The ball dropped in the lap of our left guard, sittin' there on his tail. We felt relieved till Little Bill yelled for time. I went out and found Powers was done. He'd snapped both collarbones.

"Good night," Coach said.

"It's no worse than it was," I said, "because we haven't been in the game anyhow since Little Bill's run."

Powers had to quit, though he was crazy to stay in. He said he didn't care if he broke his back, he wouldn't stay

out. I remember recallin' just then how Allerdice did all the kicking, both punting and place kicking, against Penn when he had one collarbone broke. He'd ketch and drop the ball with one hand. But Powers couldn't work either hand, so we had to take him out.

I and Nonpareil got him off the field and held him while the doc set the bones and tied him up. When we got back to the Bench, there was Tippecanoe way back there on their own forty-yard line, getting ready to start down the boulevard again. I didn't find out how they got there till next day, when I saw a Chicago paper.

"Possessed of a demon, and driving the leather with all the fury his slight frame contained, Little Bill Brown punted from behind his own goal line. Little Bill is no Powers, no Allerdice, no Pat O'Dea, but he IS a Little Bill. He drove the ball on a line, just as Ty Cobb cracks the horsehide over the infielders' heads. Little Bill had aimed at the fifty-five yard line and the sideline, and he did better than he dreamed. The ball struck just inside the fifty-five, bounced to the Tippecanoe forty-five, still inside, and then rolled out at the forty, full seventy-five yards from where Little Bill stood."

I saved that clipping. "Possessed of a demon" was right, I thought, as I got a look at Little Bill. He was mad at last, and I saw I had done right in telling him his dad was here.

As I said, Tippecanoe started down again, not discouraged by that terrific kick. It was, I thought, Coach thought, everybody thought, the beginning of the end.

Tippecanoe thought so, and so did Jordan — all of it excepting Little Bill. Little Bill had started to fight.

You have seen grand big men fight, and admired 'em. You've seen fine middlin' men fight, and hoped for 'em. But there's no sight on earth like a great little man fighting. You watch over him, you pray for him, you want to rush out and drag him away before he gets hurt, you want to lend power to his arm, you get sick when he tackles, and you want to shriek when he gets up and dusts himself, unhurt.

I'm telling you Little Bill fought, fought like a starved cat. Little Bill went up and played defensive quarter on the first three downs every time, making two out of every three tackles. If Tippecanoe had more than three yards to make on the fourth, he'd go back and catch the punt, run it up, try a play or two, and punt. Then he'd go up and play defensive quarter, and sometimes both defensive halves. He tackled all the way from center out fifteen yards. And cut 'em clean, like a corn knife. Every man he hit stopped! Nobody crawled.

Three times in that third quarter they wore him down to his fifteen-yard line or better. Once they fumbled and we recovered. Once, Little Bill did a headlong dive over center and cut down the fullback just as the ball was jabbed into his stomach. The other time he and one of the halfbacks ran a Tippecanoe half out of bounds for no gain on fourth down.

The fourth period was just as bad or worse.

"Strike me dead, strike me dead," Coach groaned,



raving up and down the sidelines. "Strike me dead if I ever say another word against that boy."

Jordan stands had long since quit cheering Little Bill. The rooters were sitting tight, praying and praying he wouldn't get hurt. All thoughts of winning or losing were gone. Tippecanoe froze in the other bleachers. Like they asked themselves, "What's the use of trying to beat a raving maniac?" They wanted to win, of course, for the sake of their Alma Mater. And for the sake of next month's allowance, bet on the dear old lady's football team. But for the sake of Little Bill they somehow let up on the cheering. Every Tippecanoe drive ground along in silence. Believe it or not, the players made more noise that last half than the crowds did. You could hear the signals, the smashing of Tippecanoe forwards into ours, the smack of the ball jammed into a fullback's belly, the tearing of a poorly made tackle, and the tunk of a punter's foot against the leather.

That wasn't the noise Little Bill's foot made. He slashed at the ball, vicious, crossways with his foot, and there was a quick "crish" as he sent it spinning just out of reach of the Tippecanoe backs. The ball went so fast our ends had no chance to get down on it. Little Bill didn't mean they should. He sent it out of bounds most of the time, on crazy rolls and jumps. I never saw a ball misbehave so in all my born days. If I'd been a Tippecanoe back, I'd been in a padded cell. It was enough to drive anyone stark staring mad.

Half the time, too, Little Bill was the first Jordan in

the neighborhood when the ball was recovered. But enough. I'm trying to show you that this little 130-pounder, with a mad up such as no big man ever dreamed about, played Jordan's game that last half. And that he completely OUTplayed Tippecanoe's game.

"Little Bill Brown, the best team Jordan has had since the days of '95, when it was customary to use eleven men instead of one, defeated Tippecanoe today, 7 to 0. Little Bill plays the best all-round game we have seen any Western eleven play in years. Little Bill is our idea of the logical All-American. It would be sacrilege to name any other players on that eleven with him. Our All-American eleven — Little Bill Brown of Jordan."

That was the way one of the Indianapolis papers talked about him and the game, next day. I saved that clipping, too.

Little Bill won the game, just as it said. The whistle had to blow some time, and it did, along about dark. There wasn't much doing for a minute or two. The Tippecanoe bunch was plumb dazed, and our gang didn't know what had happened. Both crowds were stunned. They couldn't believe what they had seen.

Jordan rooters didn't get to Little Bill until he had almost reached the gym. Then they took him off on a parade, riding him on their shoulders, and stopping at every building for a speech from the steps. And him getting cold in his blanket, and sick, dog-tired. It was sinful.

I was in the rubbing-room all this time, going through

the motions of fixing up the bunch. Believe me I didn't waste any loving care on that crowd. They'd been standing or sitting around all afternoon watching Little Bill play their game for them. I wanted to see that kid and take care of him and the million and one hurts and bruises he must have. Never felt so much like anybody's mother in my life. Finally I couldn't stand it any longer, and I started out the door after him.

"Spike, you old scoundrel!"

I ran smack into Bloody Bill Brown, right at the door. Darned if I hadn't forgot all about him. I was so surprised I couldn't hardly say a word.

"Where's that boy of mine?" demanded Old Bill. I could see he was even more worked up than I was, with the boy out in the cold with the sweat drying on him, and all that.

"He's around here somewhere," I said. "I'm just looking for him myself. And believe me, Bill, he's **SOME** boy."

"Is he?" said Bill. I was too much excited to notice how he said it.

"IS he?" I yelled. "Why, you old fool, didn't you **SEE** him?"

Then I heard cleats a-clumping down the cement floor, and looked around. It was Little Bill.

"Here he comes now," I said. "A chip off the old block. Some scrapper, this boy," I said. "Like father like son," I said.

Old Bloody Bill looked at the boy.

"Like father like hell," he said. "That's not MY boy. But I wish he was," he said. You can imagine my feelings.

He patted Little Bill on the shoulder as the kid tried to brush by into the rubbing-room. I grabbed him by the arm.

"Here you," I said. "Little Bill," I said, "Didn't you come in here with a note last September saying you was Bill Brown's boy? Didn't you?"

"Yes," Little Bill said, kinda queer.

"Then ain't he your father?" I said.

"No, he ain't," said Little Bill. "I ain't got — no, he's not my father," he said, stubborn and getting choky. He tried to pull away, but I held him.

"What's the idea?" I said. "Speak up. Where'd you get that letter?" I said.

Old Bloody Bill butted in then and took hold of things.

"Son," he said to Little Bill, sorta soothing. "Tell us all about it. Spike, here, thinks you're my boy, but you and me know you're not. I'd like to claim you if I could. Tell us what's been going on."

His being so soft-spoken about it completely got Little Bill, and darn me if the kid didn't sit right down on a step and begin to bawl. Yes, he did, just like a good fellow. Finally we got it out of him, when he had dried up a little.

"Aw," he said, "I oughtn't tell, but my name IS Bill Brown. The other Bill Brown and I room together. He didn't wanta play, so I did it for him."

"I thought it funny my boy'd be playing quarter," said Bloody Bill. "Spike," he said to me, and you could have knocked me over with a pinfeather. "My boy is six feet one and weighs 210 in his hide."

"Boy," and Bloody Bill turned to Little Bill. "I'm for you, and you're a grand little man. You're a better man than my big kid," he said. "And now, for my own boy's good," he said, "tell me all about this thing."

So it turned out that the two Bill Browns had met on the train coming into town that fall and talked about everything, as two kids will. Little Bill, who could play football a little, he told Big Bill, when he wasn't busy earning his living, agreed to play in Big Bill's place. Big Bill, it seemed, didn't care much for the game. The consideration was Little Bill's board and room all that year. It was the best way Little Bill could find to earn his way through, he said. He didn't have any father, he said.

"I never supposed a guy's father would think enough of him to come all the way from Washington to see him play football," Little Bill said, beginning to sniffle again. "We'd have got away with it if it hadn't been for that," he said.

"I'd have come a lot farther to see what I did," said Bloody Bill, putting his hands on the kid's two shoulders. "It's all right, Son. It's all right. Never you mind. But listen," he said, "where's my boy? What's he doing?"

"He's trying out for the dramatic club," said Little Bill.

"Cawd," Bloody Bill said. "MY son, six one and two

ten! Boy," he said, with blood in his eye, "can you take me where he is? "

But of course the kid couldn't leave until he'd got his rubdown and bath.

"Spike," said Bloody Bill to me when I was working on Little Bill's ankle, "too darn many Bills around here."

"Playable next fall," I said, quick, like that. "Boy, we'll certainly 'Roll, Jordan, Roll,' next fall."

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. Who tells the story? What do you learn about this man from the way he talks?
2. How does Little Bill get a chance to try out for the team?
3. Why does the coach treat Little Bill as he does?
4. Why is Little Bill able to play such good football in spite of his size?
5. How does Bloody Bill happen to come to the Thanksgiving game?
6. What strikes Spike as odd in Bloody Bill's letter?
7. Why does Spike keep the news of the letter from Little Bill?
8. What is there about Little Bill's behavior before the game that worries both the coach and the trainer?
9. What effect does the news of Bloody Bill's presence have on Little Bill?
10. What explanations are given in the rubbing-room?
11. Where did somebody in the story say something that made you laugh?
12. Of what particular moment or incident in the story do you have the clearest picture?

13. What is the point of Spike's remark, "Playable next fall"?

*If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. Let four or five of the people in your class who know most about football form a board of experts and answer the questions of other members of the class who do not understand clearly all of the football terms and plays described in the story.
2. It is the evening following the big game. Bloody Bill has taken Little Bill and his son out for Thanksgiving dinner. Write or act out the conversation that takes place.
3. Describe as vividly as you can the most exciting game you ever saw or played. (You may want to use your imagination to make it a little more exciting than it really was.)

*If You Want to Read*

"The Freshman Full-Back," Ralph D. Paine

"Goliath," Dana Burnet

*The Varmint*, Owen Johnson

"A Matter of Loyalty," Lawrence Perry

*The Omnibus of Sport* (true stories, poems, and fiction about sport collected by Grantland Rice and Harford Powel)





## THE TRIAL IN TOM BELCHER'S STORE

by Samuel Arthur Derieux

ALL boys and girls like pets, and a country boy, especially, must have a dog to be happy. And sometimes even an honest boy meets a temptation that he finds hard to conquer. What do you think you would have done in Davy's place in this tale of a ragged country boy and Old Man Thornycroft's imprisoned dog?

SAMUEL ARTHUR DERIEUX, like Robert Louis Stevenson, did not allow poor health to keep him from leading an active life. In fact, he probably acquired more skills and hobbies than most healthy people can find time and energy for. He wrote stories, did wood-carving and clay-modeling, painted, played the piano, and taught school.

Though some of his best stories are not stories of animals, he is best known for his dog stories, of which "The Trial in Tom Belcher's Store" is one of the finest.

Mr. Derieux, the son of a widely known Baptist minister, was born in Richmond, Virginia. He studied at Richmond College (now a university), Johns Hopkins, and the University of Chicago, and lived in half a dozen different states. He was living in New York City at the time of his death in 1928.

## THE TRIAL IN TOM BELCHER'S STORE

IT was a plain case of affinity between Davy Allen and Old Man Thornycroft's hound dog Buck. Davy, hurrying home along the country road one cold winter afternoon, his mind intent on finishing his chores before dark, looked back after passing Old Man Thornycroft's house to find Buck trying to follow him — *trying* to, because the old man, who hated to see anybody or anything but himself have his way, had chained a heavy block to him to keep him from doing what nature had intended him to do — roam the woods and poke his long nose in every briar patch after rabbits.

At the sight Davy stopped, and the dog came on, dragging behind him in the road the block of wood fastened by a chain to his collar, and trying at the same time to wag his tail. He was tan-colored, lean as a rail, long-eared, a hound every inch; and Davy was a ragged country boy who lived alone with his mother and who had an old single-barrel shotgun at home and who had in his grave boy's eyes a look, clear and unmistakable, of woods and fields.

To say it was love at first sight when that hound, dragging his prison around with him, looked up into the boy's face and when that ragged boy who loved the woods and had a gun at home looked down into the hound's eyes would hardly be putting it strong enough. It was more than love — it was perfect understand-

ing, perfect comprehension. "I'm your dog," said the hound's upraised, melancholy eyes. "I'll jump rabbits and bring them around for you to shoot. I'll make the frosty hills echo with music for you. I'll follow you everywhere you go. I'm your dog if you want me — yours to the end of my days."

And Davy, looking down into those upraised, beseeching eyes, and at that heavy block of wood, and at the raw place the collar had worn on the neck, then at Old Man Thornycroft's bleak, unpainted house on the hill, with the unhomelike yard and the tumble-down fences, felt a great pity, the pity of the free for the imprisoned, and a great longing to own, not a dog, but *this* dog.

"Want to come along?" he grinned.

The hound sat down on his haunches, elevated his long nose, and poured out to the cold winter sky the passion and longing of his soul. Davy understood, shook his head, looked once more into the pleading eyes, then at the bleak house from which this prisoner had dragged himself.

"That ol' devil!" he said. "He ain't fitten to own a dog. Oh, I wish he was mine!"

A moment he hesitated there in the road; then he turned and hurried away from temptation.

"He ain't mine," he muttered. "Oh, dammit all!"

But temptation followed him as it has followed many a boy and man. A little way down the road was a pasture through which by a footpath he could cut off half a mile of the three miles that lay between him and home. Poised on top of the high rail fence that bordered the

road, he looked back. The hound was still trying to follow, walking straddle-legged, head down, all entangled with the taut chain that dragged the heavy block. The boy watched the frantic efforts, pity and longing on his face; then he jumped off the fence inside the pasture and hurried on down the hill, face set straight ahead.

He had entered a pine thicket when he heard behind the frantic, choking yelps of a dog in dire distress. Knowing what had happened, he ran back. Within the pasture the hound, only his hind feet touching the ground, was struggling and pawing at the fence. He had jumped; the block had caught and was hanging him. Davy rushed to him. Breathing fast, he unclicked the chain. The block and chain fell on the other side of the fence, and the dog was free. Shrewdly the boy looked back up the road; the woods hid the old man's house from view, and no one was to be seen. With a little grin of triumph he turned and broke into a run down the pasture hill toward the pines, the wind blowing gloriously into his face, the dog galloping beside him.

Still running, the two came out into the road that led home, and suddenly Davy stopped short and his face flushed. Yonder around the bend on his gray mare jogged Squire Kirby toward them, his pipe in his mouth, his white beard stuck cozily inside the bosom of his big overcoat. There was no use to run, no use to try to make the dog hide, no use to try to hide himself — the old man had seen them both. Suppose he knew whose dog this was! Heart pounding, Davy waited beside the road.

Mr. Kirby drew rein opposite them and looked down

with eyes that twinkled under his bushy white brows. He always stopped to ask the boy how his mother was and how they were getting along. Davy had been to his house many a time with eggs and chickens to sell, or with a load of seasoned oak wood. Many a time he had warmed before Mr. Kirby's fire in the big living- and bedroom combined and eaten Mrs. Kirby's fine white cake covered with frosting. Never before had he felt ill at ease in the presence of the kindly old man.

"That's a genuine hound you got there, son, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir," said Davy.

"Good for rabbits an' 'possums an' coons, eh?"

"He shore is!"

"Well, next big fat 'possum you an' him ketch, you bring that 'possum 'round, an' me an' you'll talk business. Maybe we'll strike a bargain. Got any good sweet potatoes? Well, you bring four or five bushels along to eat that 'possum with. Haulin' any wood these days? Bring me a load or two of good, dry oak—pick it out, son, hear? How's your ma? All right? That's good. Here—"

He reached deep down in a pocket of his enormous faded overcoat, brought out two red apples, and leaned down out of his saddle, that creaked under the strain of his weight.

"Try one of 'em yourself, an' take one of 'em home to your ma. Git up, Mag!"

He jogged on down the road, and the boy, sobered, walked on. One thing was certain, though; Mr. Kirby

hadn't known whose dog this was. What difference did it make, anyhow? He hadn't stolen anything. He couldn't let a dog choke to death before his eyes. What did Old Man Thornycroft care about a dog, anyhow, the hardhearted old skinflint!

He remembered the trouble his mother had had when his father died and Old Man Thornycroft pushed her for a note he had given. He had heard people talk about it at the time, and he remembered how white his mother's face had been. Old Man Thornycroft had refused to wait, and his mother had had to sell five acres of the best land on the little farm to pay the note. It was after the sale that Mr. Kirby, who lived five miles away, had ridden over.

"Why didn't you let me know, Mrs. Allen!" he had demanded. "I would have loaned you the money — gladly, gladly!" He had risen from the fire and pulled on the same overcoat he wore now. It was faded then, and that was two years ago.

It was sunset when Davy reached home to find his mother out in the clean-swept yard picking up chips in her apron. From the bedroom window of the little one-storied unpainted house came a bright red glow, and from the kitchen the smell of cooking meat. His mother straightened up from her task with a smile when with his new-found partner he entered the yard.

"Why, Davy," she asked, "where did you get him?"

"He — he just followed me, Ma."

"But whose dog is he?"

"He's mine, Ma — he just took up with me."

"Where, Davy?"

"Oh, way back down the road — in a pasture."

"He must belong to somebody."

"He's just a ol' hound dog, Ma, that's all he is. Lots of hounds don't belong to nobody — everybody knows that, Ma. Look at him, Ma. Mighty nigh starved to death. Lemme keep him. We can feed him on scraps. He can sleep under the house. Me an' him will keep you in rabbits. You won't have to kill no more chickens. Nobody don't want him but me!"

From her gaunt height she looked down into the boy's eager eyes, then at the dog beside him. "All right, son," she said. "If he don't belong to anybody."

That night Davy alternately whistled and talked to the dog beside him as he husked the corn he had raised with his own hands, and chopped the wood he had cut and hauled — for since his father's death he had kept things going. He ate supper in a sort of haze; he hurried out with a tin plate of scraps; he fed the grateful, hungry dog on the kitchen steps. He begged some vaseline from his mother and rubbed it on the sore neck. Then he got two or three empty gunnysacks out of the corncrib, crawled under the house to a warm place beside the chimney, and spread them out for a bed. He went into the house whistling; he didn't hear a word of the chapter his mother read out of the Bible. Before he went to bed in the shed room, he raised the window.

"You all right, old feller?" he called.



Underneath the house he heard the responsive tap-tap of a tail in the dry dust. He climbed out of his clothes, leaving them in a pile in the middle of the floor, tumbled into bed, and pulled the covers high over him.

"Golly!" he said. "Oh, golly!"

Next day he hunted till sundown. The Christmas holidays were on, and there was no thought of school. He went only now and then, anyway, for since his father's death there was too much for him to do at home. He hunted in the opposite direction from Old Man Thornycroft's. It was three miles away; barriers of woods and bottoms and hills lay between, and the old man seldom stirred beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but Davy wanted to be on the safe side.

There were moments, though, when he thought of the old man and wondered if he had missed the dog and whether he would make any search for him. There were sober moments, too, when he thought of his mother and Mr. Kirby and wished he had told them the truth. But then the long-drawn bay of the hound would come from the bottoms ahead, and he would hurry to the summons, his face flushed and eager. The music of the dog running, the sound of the shots, and his own triumphant yells started many an echo among the silent frosted hills that day. He came home with enough meat to last a week — six rabbits. As he hurried into the yard he held them up for the inspection of his mother, who was feeding the chickens.

"He's the finest rabbit dog ever was, Ma! Oh, golly,

he can follow a trail! I never see anything like it, Ma; I never did! I'll skin 'em an' clean 'em after supper. You ought to have saw him, Ma! Golly!"

And while he chopped the wood and milked the cow and fed the mule and skinned the rabbits, he saw other days ahead like this, and whistled and sang and talked to the hound, who followed close at his heels every step he took.

Then one afternoon, while he was patching the lot fence, with Buck sunning himself near the woodpile, came Old Man Thornycroft. Davy recognized his buggy as it turned the bend in the road. He quickly dropped his tools, called Buck to him, and got behind the house, where he could see without being seen. The buggy stopped in the road, and the old man, his hard, pinched face working, his buggy whip in his hand, came down the walk and called Mrs. Allen out on the porch.

"I just come to tell you," he cried, "that your boy Davy run off with my dog las' Friday evenin'! There ain't no use to deny it. I know all about it. I seen him when he passed in front of the house. I found the block I had chained to the dog beside the road. I heered Squire Jim Kirby talkin' to some men in Tom Belcher's sto' this very mornin'; just happened to overhear him as I come in. 'A boy an' a dog,' he says, 'is the happiest combination in nater.' Then he went on to tell about your boy an' a tan dog. He had met 'em in the road. Met 'em when? Last Friday evenin'. Oh, there ain't no use to deny it, Mrs. Allen! Your boy Davy — he stole my dog!"

"Mr. Thornycroft" — Davy could not see his mother, but he could hear her voice tremble — "he did *not* know whose dog it was!"

"He didn't? He didn't?" yelled the old man. "An' him a boy that knows ever' dog for ten miles around! Right in front of my house, I tell you — that's where he picked him up — that's where he tolled him off! Didn't I tell you, woman, I seen him pass? Didn't I tell you I found the block down the road? Didn't know whose dog it was? Ridiculous, ridiculous! Call him, ask him, face him with it. Likely he'll lie — but you'll see his face. Call him, that's all I ask. Call him!"

"Davy!" called Mrs. Allen. "Davy!"

Just a moment the boy hesitated. Then he went around the house. The hound stuck very close to him, eyes full of terror, tail tucked as he looked at the old man.

"There he is — with my dog!" cried the old man. "You didn't know whose dog it was, did you, son? Eh? You didn't know, now, did you?"

"Yes!" cried the boy. "I knowed!"

"Hear that, Mrs. Allen? Did he know? What do you say now? He stole my dog, didn't he? That's what he done, didn't he? Answer me, woman! You come here!" he yelled, his face livid, and started, whip raised, toward boy and dog.

There were some smooth white stones the size of hen eggs arranged around a flower bed in the yard, and Davy stood near these stones — and now, quick as a flash, he stooped down and picked one up.

"You stop!" he panted, his face very white.

His mother cried out and came running toward him, but Thornycroft had stopped. No man in his right mind wants to advance on a country boy with a rock. Goliath tried it once.

"All right!" screamed the old man. "You steal first — then you try to assault an old man! I didn't come here to raise no row. I just came here to warn you, Mrs. Allen. I'll have the law on that boy — I'll have the law on him before another sun sets!"

He turned and hurried toward the buggy. Davy dropped the rock. Mrs. Allen stood looking at the old miser, who was clambering into his buggy, with a sort of horror. Then she ran toward the boy.

"Oh, Davy! run after him. Take the dog to him. He's terrible, Davy, terrible! Run after him — anything — anything!"

But the boy looked up at her with grim mouth and hard eyes.

"I ain't a-goin' to do it, Ma!" he said.

It was after supper that very night that the summons came. Bob Kelley, rural policeman, brought it.

"Me an' Squire Kirby went to town this mornin'," he said, "to look up some things about court in the mornin'. This evenin' we run into Old Man Thornycroft on the street, lookin' for us. He was awful excited. He had been to Mr. Kirby's house, an' found out Mr. Kirby was in town, an' followed us. He wanted a warrant swore out right there. Mr. Kirby tried to argue with him, but

it warn't no use. So at last Mr. Kirby turned to me. 'You go on back, Bob,' he said. 'This'll give me some more lookin' up to do. Tell my wife I'll just spend the night with Judge Fowler, an' git back in time for court in Belcher's sto' in the mornin'. An', Bob, you just stop by Mrs. Allen's — she's guardian of the boy — an' tell her I say to bring him to Belcher's sto' tomorrow mornin' at nine. You be there, too, Mr. Thornycroft — an', by the way, bring that block of wood you been talkin' about.' ”

That was all the squire had said, declared the rural policeman. No, he hadn't sent any other message — just said he would read up on the case. The rural policeman went out and closed the door behind him. It had been informal, haphazard, like the life of the community in which they lived. But, for all that, the law had knocked at the door of the Widow Allen, and left a white-faced mother and a bewildered boy behind.

They tried to resume their usual employments. Mrs. Allen sat down beside the table, picked up her sewing and put her glasses on, but her hands trembled when she tried to thread the needle. Davy sat on a split-bottom chair in the corner, his feet up on the rungs, and tried to be still; but his heart was pounding fast, and there was a lump in his throat. Presently he got up and went out of doors, to get in some kindling on the back porch before it snowed, he told his mother. But he went because he couldn't sit there any longer, because he was about to explode with rage and grief and fear and bitterness.

He did not go toward the woodpile — what difference did dry kindling make now? At the side of the house he stooped down and softly called Buck. The hound came to him, wriggling along under the beams, and he leaned against the house and lovingly pulled the brier-torn ears. A long time he stayed there, feeling on his face already the fine mist of snow. Tomorrow the ground would be white; it didn't snow often in that country; day after tomorrow everybody would hunt rabbits — everybody but him and Buck.

It was snowing hard when at last he went back into the warm room, so warm that he pulled off his coat. Once more he tried to sit still in the split-bottom chair. But there is no rage that consumes like the rage of a boy. In its presence he is so helpless! If he were a man, thought Davy, he would go to Old Man Thornycroft's house that night, call him out, and thrash him in the road. If he were a man, he would curse, he would do something. He looked wildly about the room, the hopelessness of it all coming over him in a wave. Then suddenly, because he wasn't a man, because he couldn't do what he wanted to do, he began to cry, not as a boy cries, but more as a man cries, in shame and bitterness, his shoulders shaken by great convulsive sobs, his head buried in his hands, his fingers running through his tangled mop of hair.

"Davy, Davy!" The sewing and the scissors slipped to the floor. His mother was down on her knees beside him, one arm about his shoulders, trying to pry his face

from his hands, trying to look into his eyes. "You're my man, Davy! You're the only man, the only help I've got. You're my life, Davy. Poor boy! Poor child!"

He caught hold of her convulsively, and she pressed his head against her breast. Then he saw that she was crying, and he grew quiet and wiped his eyes with his ragged coat sleeve.

"I'm all right now, Ma," he said; but he looked at her wildly.

She did not follow him into his little unceiled bedroom. She must have known that he had reached that age where no woman could help him. It must be a man now to whom he could pin his faith. And while he lay awake, tumbling and tossing, along with bitter thoughts of Old Man Thornycroft came other bitter thoughts of Mr. Kirby, whom, deep down in his boy's heart, he had worshipped — Mr. Kirby, who had sided with Old Man Thornycroft and sent a summons with — no message for him. "God!" he said. "God!" And pulled his hair, down there under the covers; and he hated the law that would take a dog from him and give it back to that old man — the law that Mr. Kirby represented.

It was still snowing when next morning he and his mother drove out of the yard and he turned the head of the reluctant old mule in the direction of Belcher's store. A bitter wind cut their faces, but it was not as bitter as the heart of the boy. Only twice on that five-mile ride did he speak. The first time was when he looked back to find Buck, whom they had left at home, thinking he

would stay under the house on such a day, following very close behind the buggy.

"Might as well let him come on," said the boy.

The second time was when they came in sight of Belcher's store, dim yonder through the swirling snow. Then he looked up into his mother's face.

"Ma," he said grimly. "I ain't no thief!"

She smiled as bravely as she could with her stiffened face and with the tears so near the surface. She told him that she knew it, and that everybody knew it. But there was no answering smile on the boy's set face.

The squire's gray mare, standing huddled up in the midst of other horses and of buggies under the shed near the store, told that court had probably already convened. Hands numb, the boy hitched the old mule to the only rack left under the shed, then made Buck lie down under the buggy. Heart pounding, he went up on the store porch with his mother and pushed the door open.

There was a commotion when they entered. The men, standing about the pot-bellied stove, their overcoats steaming, made way for them. Old Man Thornycroft looked quickly and triumphantly around. In the rear of the store the squire rose from a table, in front of which was a cleared space.

"Pull up a chair nigh the stove for Mrs. Allen, Tom Belcher," he said. "I'm busy tryin' this chicken-stealin' Negro. When I get through, Mrs. Allen, if you're ready I'll call your case."

Davy stood beside his mother while the trial of the



Negro proceeded. Some of the fight had left him now, crowded down here among all these grown men, and especially in the presence of Mr. Kirby, for it is hard for a boy to be bitter long. But with growing anxiety he heard the sharp questions the magistrate asked the Negro; he saw the frown of justice; he heard the sentence "sixty days on the gang." And the Negro had stolen only a chicken — and he had run off with another man's dog!

"The old man's rough this mornin'," a man whispered to another above him; and he saw the furtive grin on the face of Old Man Thornycroft, who leaned against the counter, waiting.

His heart jumped into his mouth when after a silence the magistrate spoke: "Mr. Thornycroft, step forward, sir. Put your hand on the book here. Now tell us about that dog of yours that was stole."

Looking first at the magistrate, then at the crowd, as if to impress them also, the old man told in a high-pitched, excited voice all the details — his seeing Davy Allen pass in front of his house last Friday afternoon, his missing the dog, his finding the block of wood down the road beside the pasture fence, his overhearing the squire's talk right here in the store, his calling on Mrs. Allen, the boy's threatening him.

"I tell you," he cried, "that's a dangerous character — that boy!"

"Is that all you've got to say?" asked the squire.

"It's enough, ain't it?" demanded Thornycroft angrily.

The squire nodded and spat into the cuspidor between his feet. "I think so," he said quietly. "Stand aside. Davy Allen, step forward. Put your hand on the book here, son. Davy, how old are you?"

The boy gulped. "Thirteen years old, goin' on fo'-teen."

"You're old enough, son, to know the nater of the oath you're about to take. For over two years you've been the mainstay an' support of your mother. You've had to carry the burdens and responsibilities of a man, Davy. The testimony you give in this case will be the truth, the whole truth, an' nothin' but the truth, so help you God. What about it?"

Davy nodded, his face very white.

"All right now. Tell us about it. Talk loud so we can hear — all of us."

The boy's eyes never left Mr. Kirby's while he talked. Something in them held him, fascinated him, overawed him. Very large and imposing he looked there behind his little table, with his faded old overcoat on, and there was no sound in the room but the boy's clear voice.

"An' you come off an' left the dog at first?"

"Yes, sir."

"An' you didn't unfasten the chain from the block till the dog got caught in the fence?"

"No, sir, I didn't."

"Did you try to get him to follow you then?"

"No, sir, he wanted to."

"Ask him, Mr. Kirby," broke in Thornycroft angrily, "if he tried to drive him home!"

"I'll ask him whatever seems fit an' right to me, sir," said Mr. Kirby. "What did you tell your ma, Davy, when you got home?"

"I told her he followed me."

"Did you tell her whose dog he was?"

"No, sir."

"Ain't that what you ought to have done? Ain't it?"

Davy hesitated. "Yes, sir."

There was a slight shuffling movement among the men crowded about. Somebody cleared his throat. Mr. Kirby resumed.

"This block you been tellin' about — how was it fastened to the dog?"

"Thar was a chain fastened to the block by a staple. The other end was fastened to the collar."

"How heavy do you think that block was?"

"About ten pound, I reckon."

"Five," broke in Old Man Thornycroft with a sneer.

Mr. Kirby turned to him. "You fetched it with you, didn't you? I told you to. It's evidence. Bob Kelley, go out to Mr. Thornycroft's buggy an' bring that block of wood into court."

The room was silent while the rural policeman was gone. Davy still stood in the cleared space before Mr. Kirby, his ragged overcoat on, his tattered hat in his hand, breathing fast, afraid to look at his mother. Everybody

turned when Kelley came in with the block of wood. Everybody craned his neck to watch, while at the magistrate's order Kelley weighed the block of wood on the store's scales, which he put on the magistrate's table.

"Fo'teen punds," said Mr. Kirby. "Take the scales away."

"It had rubbed all the skin off'n the dog's neck," broke in Davy impulsively. "It was all raw an' bleedin'."

"Aw, that ain't so!" cried Thornycroft.

"Is the dog out there?" asked Mr. Kirby.

"Yes, sir, under the buggy."

"Bob Kelley, you go out an' bring that dog into court."

The rural policeman went out and came back with the hound, who looked eagerly up from one face to the other, then, seeing Davy, came to him and stood against him, still looking around with that expression of melancholy on his face that a hound dog always wears except when he's in action.

"Bring the dog here, son!" commanded Mr. Kirby. He examined the raw place on the neck. "Any of you gentlemen care to take a look?" he asked.

"It was worse than that," declared Davy, "till I rubbed vase-leen on it."

Old Man Thornycroft pushed forward, face quivering. "What's all this got to do with the boy stealin' the dog?" he demanded. "That's what I want to know — what's it got to do?"

"Mr. Thornycroft," said Kirby, "at nine o'clock this mornin' this place ceased to be Tom Belcher's sto', an'

become a court of justice. Some things are seemly in a court, some not. You stand back there! ”

The old man stepped back to the counter and stood pulling his chin, his eyes running over the crowd of faces.

“Davy Allen,” spoke Mr. Kirby, “you stand back there with your ma. Tom Belcher, make way for him. And, Tom, s’pose you put another stick of wood in that stove an’ poke up the fire.” He took off his glasses, blew on them, polished them with his handkerchief, and readjusted them. Then, leaning back in his chair, he spoke.

“Gentlemen, from the beginnin’ of time, as fur back as records go, a dog’s been the friend, companion, an’ protector of man. Folks say he come from the wolf, but that ain’t no reflection on him, seein’ that we come from monkeys ourselves, an’ I believe, takin’ all things into account, I’d as soon have a wolf for a ancestor as a monkey, an’ a little ruther.

“Last night in the libery of my old friend Judge Fowler in town, I looked up some things about this dog question. I find that there have been some queer decisions handed down by the courts, showin’ that the law does recognize the fact that a dog is different from other four-footed critters. For instance, it has been held that a dog has a right to protect not only his life but his dignity; that where a man worries a dog beyond what would be reasonable to expect any self-respectin’ critter to stand, that dog has a right to bite that man, an’ that man can’t collect any damages — provided the bitin’ is done at the time of the worryin’ an’ in sudden heat an’ passion. That has

been held in the courts, gentlemen. The law that holds for man holds for dogs.

"Another thing: If the engineer of a railroad train sees a cow or a horse or a sheep on the track, or a hog, he must stop the train or the road is liable for any damage done 'em. But if he sees a man walkin' along the track, he has a right to presume that the man, bein' a critter of more or less intelligence, will git off, an' he is not called on to stop under ordinary circumstances. The same thing holds true of a dog. The engineer has a right to presume that the dog, bein' a critter of intelligence, will get off the track. Here again the law is the same for dog an' man.

"But — if the engineer has reason to believe that the man's mind is took up with some object of an engrossin' nater, he is supposed to stop the train till the man comes to himself an' looks around. The same thing holds true of a dog. If the engineer has reason to suspect that the dog's mind is occupied with some engrossin' topic, he must stop the train. That case has been tested in this very state, where a dog was on the track settin' a covey of birds in the adjoinin' field. The railroad was held responsible for the death of that dog, because the engineer ought to have known by the action of the dog that his mind was on somethin' else beside railroad trains an' locomotives."

Again the magistrate spat into the cuspidor between his feet. Davy, still watching him, felt his mother's grip on his arm. Everyone was listening so closely that the

whispered sneering comment of Old Man Thornycroft to the man next to him was audible, "What's all this got to do with the case?"

"The p'int I'm gettin' to is this," went on Mr. Kirby, not paying any attention to him: "a dog is not like a cow or a horse or any four-footed critter. He's a individual, an' so the courts have held in spirit if not in actual words. Now this court of mine here in Tom Belcher's sto' ain't like other courts. I have to do the decidin' myself; I have to interpret the true spirit of the law, without technicalities an' quibbles such as becloud it in other an' higher courts. An' I hold that since a dog is *de facto* an' *de jure* an individual, he has a right to life, liberty, an' the pursuit of happiness.

"Therefore, gentlemen, I hold that that houn' dog, Buck, had a perfect right to follow that boy, Davy Allen, there; an' I hold that Davy Allen was not called on to drive that dog back, or interfere in any way with that dog followin' him if the dog so chose. You've heard the evidence of the boy. You know, an' I know, he has spoke the truth this day, an' there ain't no evidence to the contrary. The boy did not entice the dog. He even went down the road, leavin' him behind. He run back only when the dog was in dire need an' chokin' to death. He wasn't called on to put that block an' chain back on the dog. He couldn't help it if the dog followed him. He no more stole that dog than I stole him. He's no more a thief than I am. I dismiss this case, Mr. Thornycroft, this case you've brought against Davy Allen. I declare

him innocent of the charge of theft. I set it down right here on the records of this court."

"Davy!" gasped Mrs. Allen. "Davy!"

But, face working, eyes blazing, Old Man Thornycroft started forward, and the dog, panting, shrank between boy and mother. "Jim Kirby!" cried the old man, stopping for a moment in the cleared space. "You're magistrate. What you say goes. But that dog thar—he's mine! He's my property—mine by law!" He jerked a piece of rope out of his overcoat pocket and came on toward the cowering dog. "Tom Belcher, Bob Kelley! Stop that dog! He's mine!"

"Davy!" Mrs. Allen was holding the boy. "Don't—don't say anything. You're free to go home. Your record's clear. The dog's his!"

"Hold on!" Mr. Kirby had risen from his chair. "You come back here, Mr. Thornycroft. This court's not adjourned yet. If you don't get back, I'll stick a fine to you for contempt you'll remember the rest of your days. You stand where you are, sir! Right there! Don't move till I'm through!"

Quivering, the old man stood where he was. Mr. Kirby sat down, face flushed, eyes blazing. "Punch up that fire, Tom Belcher," he said. "I ain't through yet."

The hound came trembling back to Davy, looked up in his face, licked his hand, then sat down at the side opposite his former master, looking around now and then at the old man, terror in his eyes. In the midst of a deathly silence the magistrate resumed.



"What I was goin' to say, gentlemen, is this: I'm not only magistrate, I'm an officer in an organization that you country fellers likely don't know of, an organization known as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. As such an officer it's my duty to report an' bring to trial any man who treats a dumb brute in a cruel an' inhuman way. Mr. Thornycroft, judgin' by the looks of that houn', you ain't give him enough to eat to keep a cat alive — an' a cat, we all know, don't eat much, just messes over her vittles. You condemned that po' beast, for no fault of his own, to the life of a felon. A houn' that ain't happy at best, he's melancholy; an' a houn' that ain't allowed to run free is of all critters the wretchedest. This houn's neck is rubbed raw. God only knows what he's suffered in mind an' body. A man that would treat a dog that way ain't fitten to own one. An' I hereby notify you that, on the evidence of this boy an' the evidence before our eyes, I will indict you for breakin' the law regardin' the treatment of animals; an' I notify you, furthermore, that as magistrate I'll put the law on you for that same thing. An' it might be interestin' to you to know, sir, that I can fine you as much as five hundred dollars, or send you to jail for one year, or both, if I see fit — an' there ain't no tellin' but what I will see fit, sir."

He looked sternly at Thornycroft.

"Now I'm goin' to make a proposition that I advise you to jump at like you never jumped at anything before. If you will give up that houn' Buck — to me, say, or to anybody I decide will be kind to him — I will let

the matter drop. If you will go home like a peaceable citizen, you won't hear no more about it from me; but if you don't — "

"Git out of my way!" cried Old Man Thornycroft. "All of you! I'm goin' — I'm goin'!"

"Hold on!" said Mr. Kirby, when he had got almost to the door. "Do you, in the presence of these witnesses, turn over this dog to me, relinquishin' all claims to him, on the conditions named? Answer Yes or No?"

There was a moment's silence; then the old man cried out:

"Take the old hound! He ain't wuth the salt in his vittles!"

He jerked the door open.

"Yes or no?" called Mr. Kirby inexorably.

"Yes!" yelled the old man, and slammed the door behind him.

"One minute, gentlemen," said Mr. Kirby, rising from the table and gathering his papers and records together. "Just one more thing: If anybody here has any evidence, or knows of any, tendin' to show that this boy Davy Allen is not the proper person to turn over a houn' dog to, I hope he will speak up." He waited a moment. "In the absence of any objections, an' considerin' the evidence that's been given here this mornin', I think I'll just let that dog go back the way he come. Thank you, gentlemen. Court's adjourned!"

## SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

*What Do You Think?*

1. Where do you think this story takes place?
2. What incident begins the story?
3. Is Davy telling the truth when he says, "Ma, I ain't a thief"?
4. Does Davy tell his mother a lie about the dog? Have you ever acted in this way in a similar circumstance?
5. In what ways does Davy show how much he loves the dog?
6. What is meant by "No one in his right mind wants to advance on a country boy with a rock. Goliath tried it once"?
7. Why does Squire Kirby tell Mr. Thornycroft to bring the block of wood to court?
8. What is the point of Squire Kirby's questions to Davy about these points?
  - a. His meeting the dog
  - b. His telling his mother about the meeting
  - c. The block of wood
9. Why does the Squire have the dog brought into the store?
10. What point does the Squire prove from his reading about dogs in his lawbooks?
11. Do you think the trial was fair? Why, or why not?
12. In what ways can you compare this story with other stories about dogs in this book? in other books that you have read? with other stories about a trial in this book? in other books?

*If You Want to Talk or Write*

You can easily make this story into a play and act it in class. Use the conversation in the book and add speeches of your own. The judge can sit at the teacher's desk. Davy and his

mother can stand at one side, and Mr. Thornycroft at the other. The rest of the class can be the country people who have come to the courtroom and who talk about the case before and after the trial.

*If You Want to Read*

"Gulliver the Great," Walter A. Dyer

"Snapshot of a Dog," James Thurber

"The Coon and Dog Logan," John Schoolcraft

"Ocean Gold," John D. Morse

*The Yearling*, Marjorie Rawlings

"The Wuthless Dog," Franklin Holt

## “RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI”

by Rudyard Kipling

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI, the mongoose, is an unusual pet. You might compare him with your dog and find it hard to decide which is the better guardian and companion. But would being able to have such a wonderful little animal as a mongoose for a pet make up for having to live in a garden infested by cobras?

If you have never seen a mongoose and if there isn't one in the zoo in the town where you live, try to find a picture of one. You can find a very small picture in the dictionary. You can also find a picture of a cobra there.

ALL over the world people enjoy the short stories, novels, and poetry of Rudyard Kipling, one of the greatest English writers. His life was an eventful one. He was born in India in 1865. At the age of six he was sent to England for his education, but ill-health prevented his attending school until he was eleven. "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep," a short story of a lonely, misunderstood boy, is said to be based on his own childhood.

At seventeen, instead of going to college he returned to India, where he became an assistant editor of a British newspaper in Lahore and enjoyed the social and political life of the British settlement there. He began writing verses, later collected and published under the title of *Departmental Ditties*. Four years later he traveled from the Himalayan Mountains to the Indian Ocean, living on the frontier with the army, writing special articles for his paper, and gathering material for his later stories and poems of army life in India.

In 1890 he left India for England by a roundabout route by way of China, Japan, and the United States. In 1892 he married an American girl and settled for a while in Brattleboro, Vermont. There he wrote his famous *Jungle Books*, from which "'Rikki-tikki-tavi'" is taken. In 1897 he, his wife, and their two children left for a trip to Africa. They then settled in a quiet village in England; and though he revisited the United States several times, he never lived here again.

He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907 and was given honorary degrees by many universities.

His only son was killed in the World War, and he himself died in 1936.

## “RIKI-TIKKI-TAVI”

THIS is the story of the great war that Rikki-tikki-tavi fought singlehanded, through the bathrooms of the big bungalow in Segowlee cantonment. Darzee, the tailor-bird, helped him, and Chuchundra, the muskrat, who never comes out into the middle of the floor, but always creeps round by the wall, gave him advice; but Rikki-tikki did the real fighting.

He was a mongoose, rather like a little cat in his fur and his tail, but quite like a weasel in his head and his habits. His eyes and the end of his restless nose were pink; he could scratch himself anywhere he pleased, with any leg, front or back, that he chose to use; he could fluff up his tail till it looked like a bottle brush, and his war cry as he scuttled through the long grass was: “*Rikk-tikk-tikki-tikki-tchk!*”

One day, a high summer flood washed him out of the burrow where he lived with his father and mother and carried him, kicking and clucking, down a roadside ditch. He found a little wisp of grass floating there and clung to it till he lost his senses. When he revived, he was lying in the hot sun on the middle of a garden path, very draggled indeed, and a small boy was saying: “Here’s a dead mongoose. Let’s have a funeral.”

“No,” said his mother; “let’s take him in and dry him. Perhaps he isn’t really dead.”

They took him into the house, and a big man picked

him up between his finger and thumb and said he was not dead but half choked; so they wrapped him in cotton wool and warmed him, and he opened his eyes and sneezed.

"Now," said the big man (he was an Englishman who had just moved into the bungalow); "don't frighten him, and we'll see what he'll do."

It is the hardest thing in the world to frighten a mongoose, because he is eaten up from nose to tail with curiosity. The motto of all the mongoose family is, "Run and find out"; and Rikki-tikki was a true mongoose. He looked at the cotton wool, decided that it was not good to eat, ran all round the table, sat up and put his fur in order, scratched himself, and jumped on the small boy's shoulder.

"Don't be frightened, Teddy," said his father. "That's his way of making friends."

"Ouch! He's tickling under my chin," said Teddy.

Rikki-tikki looked down between the boy's collar and neck, snuffed at his ear, and climbed down to the floor, where he sat rubbing his nose.

"Good gracious," said Teddy's mother, "and that's a wild creature! I suppose he's so tame because we've been kind to him."

"All mongooses are like that," said her husband. "If Teddy doesn't pick him up by the tail, or try to put him in a cage, he'll run in and out of the house all day long. Let's give him something to eat."

They gave him a little piece of raw meat. Rikki-tikki



liked it immensely, and when it was finished he went out into the veranda and sat in the sunshine and fluffed up his fur to make it dry to the roots. Then he felt better.

“There are more things to find out about in this house,” he said to himself, “than all my family could find out in all their lives. I shall certainly stay and find out.”

He spent all that day roaming over the house. He nearly drowned himself in the bathtubs, put his nose into the ink on a writing-table, and burned it on the end of the big man’s cigar, for he climbed up in the big man’s lap to see how writing was done. At nightfall he ran into Teddy’s nursery to watch how kerosene lamps were lighted, and when Teddy went to bed Rikki-tikki climbed up too; but he was a restless companion, because he had to get up and attend to every noise all through the night and find out what made it. Teddy’s mother and father came in, the last thing, to look at their boy, and Rikki-tikki was awake on the pillow. “I don’t like that,” said Teddy’s mother; “he may bite the child.” “He’ll do no such thing,” said the father. “Teddy’s safer with that little beast than if he had a bloodhound to watch him. If a snake came into the nursery now — ”

But Teddy’s mother wouldn’t think of anything so awful.

Early in the morning Rikki-tikki came to early breakfast in the veranda riding on Teddy’s shoulder, and they gave him banana and some boiled egg; and he sat on all their laps one after the other, because every well-brought-up mongoose always hopes to be a house mon-

goose some day and have rooms to run about in, and Rikki-tikki's mother (she used to live in the General's house at Segowlee) had carefully told Rikki what to do if ever he came across white men.

Then Rikki-tikki went out into the garden to see what was to be seen. It was a large garden, only half-cultivated, with bushes as big as summerhouses of Marshal Niel roses, lime and orange trees, clumps of bamboos, and thickets of high grass. Rikki-tikki licked his lips. "This is a splendid hunting-ground," he said, and his tail grew bottle-brushy at the thought of it, and he scuttled up and down the garden, snuffing here and there till he heard very sorrowful voices in a thornbush.

It was Darzee, the tailorbird, and his wife. They had made a beautiful nest by pulling two big leaves together and stitching them up the edges with fibers and had filled the hollow with cotton and downy fluff. The nest swayed to and fro, as they sat on the rim and cried.

"What is the matter?" asked Rikki-tikki.

"We are very miserable," said Darzee. "One of our babies fell out of the nest yesterday and Nag ate him."

"H'm!" said Rikki-tikki, "that is very sad — but I am a stranger here. Who is Nag?"

Darzee and his wife only cowered down in the nest without answering, for from the thick grass at the foot of the bush there came a low hiss — a horrid cold sound that made Rikki-tikki jump back two clear feet. Then inch by inch out of the grass rose up the head and spread hood of Nag, the big black cobra, and he was five feet long

from tongue to tail. When he had lifted one-third of himself clear of the ground, he stayed balancing to and fro exactly as a dandelion tuft balances in the wind, and he looked at Rikki-tikki with the wicked snake's eyes that never change their expression, whatever the snake may be thinking of.

“Who is Nag?” he said. “I am Nag. The great god Brahm put his mark upon all our people when the first cobra spread his hood to keep the sun off Brahm as he slept. Look, and be afraid!”

He spread out his hood more than ever, and Rikki-tikki saw the spectacle mark on the back of it that looks exactly like the eye part of a hook-and-eye fastening. He was afraid for the minute; but it is impossible for a mongoose to stay frightened for any length of time, and though Rikki-tikki had never met a live cobra before, his mother had fed him on dead ones, and he knew that all a grown mongoose's business in life was to fight and eat snakes. Nag knew that too, and at the bottom of his cold heart he was afraid.

“Well,” said Rikki-tikki, and his tail began to fluff up again, “marks or no marks, do you think it is right for you to eat fledglings out of a nest?”

Nag was thinking to himself and watching the least little movement in the grass behind Rikki-tikki. He knew that mongooses in the garden meant death sooner or later for him and his family; but he wanted to get Rikki-tikki off his guard. So he dropped his head a little and put it on one side.

"Let us talk," he said. "You eat eggs. Why should not I eat birds?"

"Behind you! Look behind you!" sang Darzee.

Rikki-tikki knew better than to waste time in staring. He jumped up in the air as high as he could go, and just under him whizzed by the head of Nagaina, Nag's wicked wife. She had crept up behind him as he was talking, to make an end of him; and he heard her savage hiss as the stroke missed. He came down almost across her back, and if he had been an old mongoose he would have known that then was the time to break her back with one bite; but he was afraid of the terrible lashing return-stroke of the cobra. He bit, indeed, but did not bite long enough, and he jumped clear of the whisking tail, leaving Nagaina torn and angry.

"Wicked, wicked Darzee!" said Nag, lashing up as high as he could reach toward the nest in the thornbush; but Darzee had built it out of reach of snakes, and it only swayed to and fro.

Rikki-tikki felt his eyes growing red and hot (when a mongoose's eyes grow red, he is angry), and he sat back on his tail and hind legs like a little kangaroo, and looked all around him, and chattered with rage. But Nag and Nagaina had disappeared into the grass. When a snake misses its stroke, it never says anything or gives any sign of what it means to do next. Rikki-tikki did not care to follow them, for he did not feel sure that he could manage two snakes at once. So he trotted off to the gravel

path near the house, and sat down to think. It was a serious matter for him.

If you read the old books of natural history, you will find they say that when the mongoose fights the snake and happens to get bitten, he runs off and eats some herb that cures him. That is not true. The victory is only a matter of quickness of eye and quickness of foot — snake's blow against mongoose's jump — and as no eye can follow the motion of a snake's head when it strikes, that makes things much more wonderful than any magic herb. Rikki-tikki knew he was a young mongoose, and it made him all the more pleased to think that he had managed to escape a blow from behind. It gave him confidence in himself, and when Teddy came running down the path, Rikki-tikki was ready to be petted.

But just as Teddy was stooping, something flinched a little in the dust, and a tiny voice said: “Be careful. I am death!” It was Karait, the dusty brown snakeling that lies for choice on the dusty earth; and his bite is as dangerous as the cobra's. But he is so small that nobody thinks of him, and so he does the more harm to people.

Rikki-tikki's eyes grew red again, and he danced up to Karait with the peculiar rocking, swaying motion that he had inherited from his family. It looks very funny, but it is so perfectly balanced a gait that you can fly off from it at any angle you please; and in dealing with snakes this is an advantage. If Rikki-tikki had only known, he was doing a much more dangerous thing than

fighting Nag, for Karait is so small, and can turn so quickly, that unless Rikki bit him close to the back of the head, he would get the return stroke in his eye or lip. But Rikki did not know; his eyes were all red, and he rocked back and forth, looking for a good place to hold. Karait struck out. Rikki jumped sideways and tried to run in, but the wicked little dusty gray head lashed within a fraction of his shoulder, and he had to jump over the body, and the head followed his heels close.

Teddy shouted to the house: "Oh, look here! Our mongoose is killing a snake"; and Rikki-tikki heard a scream from Teddy's mother. His father ran out with a stick, but by the time he came up, Karait had lunged out once too far, and Rikki-tikki had sprung, jumped on the snake's back, dropped his head far between his forelegs, bitten as high up the back as he could get hold, and rolled away. That bite paralyzed Karait, and Rikki-tikki was just going to eat him up from the tail, after the custom of his family at dinner, when he remembered that a full meal makes a slow mongoose, and if he wanted all his strength and quickness ready, he must keep himself thin.

He went away for a dust bath under the castor-oil bushes, while Teddy's father beat the dead Karait. "What is the use of that?" thought Rikki-tikki. "I have settled it all"; and then Teddy's mother picked him up from the dust and hugged him, crying that he had saved Teddy from death, and Teddy's father said that he was a providence, and Teddy looked on with big scared eyes.

Rikki-tikki was rather amused at all the fuss, which, of course, he did not understand. Teddy's mother might just as well have petted Teddy for playing in the dust. Rikki was thoroughly enjoying himself.

That night, at dinner, walking to and fro among the wineglasses on the table, he could have stuffed himself three times over with nice things; but he remembered Nag and Nagaina, and though it was very pleasant to be patted and petted by Teddy's mother, and to sit on Teddy's shoulder, his eyes would get red from time to time, and he would go off into his long war cry of “*Rikk-tikk-tikki-tikki-tchk!*”

Teddy carried him off to bed, and insisted on Rikki-tikki sleeping under his chin. Rikki-tikki was too well bred to bite or scratch, but as soon as Teddy was asleep he went off for his nightly walk round the house, and in the dark he ran up against Chuchundra, the muskrat, creeping round by the wall. Chuchundra is a broken-hearted little beast. He whimpers and cheeps all the night, trying to make up his mind to run into the middle of the room, but he never gets there.

“Don't kill me,” said Chuchundra, almost weeping. “Rikki-tikki, don't kill me.”

“Do you think a snake-killer kills muskrats?” said Rikki-tikki scornfully.

“Those who kill snakes get killed by snakes,” said Chuchundra, more sorrowfully than ever. “And how am I to be sure that Nag won't mistake me for you some dark night?”

"There's not the least danger," said Rikki-tikki; "but Nag is in the garden, and I know you don't go there."

"My cousin Chua, the rat, told me —" said Chuchundra, and then he stopped.

"Told you what?"

"H'sh! Nag is everywhere, Rikki-tikki. You should have talked to Chua in the garden."

"I didn't — so you must tell me. Quick, Chuchundra, or I'll bite you!"

Chuchundra sat down and cried till the tears rolled off his whiskers. "I am a very poor man," he sobbed. "I never had spirit enough to run out into the middle of the room. H'sh! I mustn't tell you anything. Can't you hear, Rikki-tikki?"

Rikki-tikki listened. The house was as still as still, but he thought he could just catch the faintest *scratch-scratch* in the world — a noise as faint as that of a wasp walking on a windowpane — the dry scratch of a snake's scales on brickwork.

"That's Nag or Nagaina," he said to himself; "and he is crawling into the bathroom sluice. You're right, Chuchundra; I should have talked to Chua."

He stole off to Teddy's bathroom, but there was nothing there, and then to Teddy's mother's bathroom. At the bottom of the smooth plaster wall there was a brick pulled out to make a sluice for the bath water, and as Rikki-tikki stole in by the masonry curb where the bath is put, he heard Nag and Nagaina whispering together outside in the moonlight.



“When the house is emptied of people,” said Nagaina to her husband, “he will have to go away, and then the garden will be our own again. Go in quietly, and remember that the big man who killed Karait is the first one to bite. Then come out and tell me, and we will hunt for Rikki-tikki together.”

“But are you sure that there is anything to be gained by killing the people?” said Nag.

“Everything. When there were no people in the bungalow, did we have any mongoose in the garden? So long as the bungalow is empty, we are king and queen of the garden; and remember that as soon as our eggs in the melon bed hatch (as they may tomorrow), our children will need room and quiet.”

“I had not thought of that,” said Nag. “I will go, but there is no need that we should hunt for Rikki-tikki afterward. I will kill the big man and his wife, and the child if I can, and come away quietly. Then the bungalow will be empty, and Rikki-tikki will go.”

Rikki-tikki tingled all over with rage and hatred at this, and then Nag’s head came through the sluice, and his five feet of cold body followed it. Angry as he was, Rikki-tikki was very frightened as he saw the size of the big cobra. Nag coiled himself up, raised his head, and looked into the bathroom in the dark, and Rikki could see his eyes glitter.

“Now, if I kill him here, Nagaina will know; and if I fight him on the open floor, the odds are in his favor. What am I to do?” said Rikki-tikki-tavi.

Nag waved to and fro, and then Rikki-tikki heard him drinking from the biggest water jar that was used to fill the bath. "That is good," said the snake. "Now, when Karait was killed, the big man had a stick. He may have that stick still, but when he comes in to bathe in the morning he will not have a stick. I shall wait here till he comes. Nagaina — do you hear me? — I shall wait here in the cool till daytime."

There was no answer from outside; so Rikki-tikki knew Nagaina had gone away. Nag coiled himself down, coil by coil, round the bulge at the bottom of the water jar, and Rikki-tikki stayed still as death. After an hour he began to move, muscle by muscle, toward the jar. Nag was asleep, and Rikki-tikki looked at his big back, wondering which would be the best place for a good hold. "If I don't break his back at the first jump," said Rikki, "he can still fight; and if he fights — O Rikki!" He looked at the thickness of the neck below the hood, but that was too much for him; and a bite near the tail would only make Nag savage.

"It must be the head," he said at last; "the head above the hood; and, when I am once there, I must not let go."

Then he jumped. The head was lying a little clear of the water jar, under the curve of it; and, as his teeth met, Rikki braced his back against the bulge of the red earthenware to hold down the head. This gave him just one second's purchase, and he made the most of it. Then he was battered to and fro as a rat is shaken by a dog — to and fro on the floor, up and down, and round in great circles; but

his eyes were red, and he held on as the body cartwhipped over the floor, upsetting the tin dipper and the soap dish and the flesh brush, and banged against the tin side of the bath. As he held he closed his jaws tighter and tighter, for he made sure he would be banged to death, and, for the honor of his family, he preferred to be found with his teeth locked. He was dizzy, aching, and felt shaken to pieces when something went off like a thunderclap just behind him; a hot wind knocked him senseless, and red fire singed his fur. The big man had been wakened by the noise and had fired both barrels of a shotgun into Nag just behind the hood.

Rikki-tikki held on with his eyes shut, for now he was quite sure he was dead; but the head did not move, and the big man picked him up and said: “It’s the mongoose again, Alice; the little chap has saved our lives now.” Then Teddy’s mother came in with a very white face and saw what was left of Nag, and Rikki-tikki dragged himself to Teddy’s bedroom and spent half the rest of the night shaking himself tenderly to find out whether he really was broken into forty pieces, as he fancied.

When morning came he was very stiff, but well pleased with his doings. “Now I have Nagaina to settle with, and she will be worse than five Nags, and there’s no knowing when the eggs she spoke of will hatch. Goodness! I must go and see Darzee,” he said.

Without waiting for breakfast, Rikki-tikki ran to the thornbush where Darzee was singing a song of triumph at the top of his voice. The news of Nag’s death was all

over the garden, for the sweeper had thrown the body on the rubbish heap.

"Oh, you stupid tuft of feathers!" said Rikki-tikki, angrily. "Is this the time to sing?"

"Nag is dead — is dead — is dead!" sang Darzee. "The valiant Rikki-tikki caught him by the head and held fast. The big man brought the bang-stick and Nag fell in two pieces! He will never eat my babies again."

"All that's true enough, but where's Nagaina?" said Rikki-tikki, looking carefully round him.

"Nagaina came to the bathroom sluice and called for Nag," Darzee went on; "and Nag came out on the end of a stick — the sweeper picked him up on the end of a stick and threw him upon the rubbish heap. Let us sing about the great, the red-eyed Rikki-tikki!" and Darzee filled his throat and sang.

"If I could get up to your nest, I'd roll all your babies out!" said Rikki-tikki. "You don't know when to do the right thing at the right time. You're safe enough in your nest there, but it's war for me down here. Stop singing a minute, Darzee."

"For the great, the beautiful Rikki-tikki's sake I will stop," said Darzee. "What is it, O Killer of the terrible Nag?"

"Where is Nagaina, for the third time?"

"On the rubbish heap by the stables, mourning for Nag. Great is Rikki-tikki with the white teeth."

"Bother my white teeth! Have you ever heard where she keeps her eggs?"

"In the melon bed, on the end nearest the wall, where

the sun strikes nearly all day. She had them there weeks ago.”

“And you never thought it worth while to tell me? The end nearest the wall, you said?”

“Rikki-tikki, you are not going to eat her eggs?”

“Not eat exactly; no. Darzee, if you have a grain of sense you will fly off to the stables and pretend that your wing is broken, and let Nagaina chase you away to this bush! I must get to the melon bed, and if I went there now she’d see me.”

Darzee was a featherbrained little fellow who could never hold more than one idea at a time in his head; and just because he knew that Nagaina’s children were born in eggs like his own, he didn’t think at first that it was fair to kill them. But his wife was a sensible bird, and she knew that cobras’ eggs meant young cobras later on; so she flew off from the nest and left Darzee to keep the babies warm and continue his song about the death of Nag. Darzee was very like a man in some ways.

She fluttered in front of Nagaina by the rubbish heap and cried out, “Oh, my wing is broken! The boy in the house threw a stone at me and broke it.” Then she fluttered more desperately than ever.

Nagaina lifted up her head and hissed, “You warned Rikki-tikki when I would have killed him. Indeed and truly, you’ve chosen a bad place to be lame in.” And she moved toward Darzee’s wife, slipping along over the dust.

“The boy broke it with a stone!” shrieked Darzee’s wife.

“Well! It may be some consolation to you when

you're dead to know that I shall settle accounts with the boy. My husband lies on the rubbish heap this morning, but before night the boy in the house will lie very still. What is the use of running away? I am sure to catch you. Little fool, look at me!"

Darzee's wife knew better than to do *that*, for a bird who looks at a snake's eyes gets so frightened that she cannot move. Darzee's wife fluttered on, piping sorrowfully, and never leaving the ground, and Nagaina quickened her pace.

Rikki-tikki heard them going up the path from the stables, and he raced for the end of the melon patch near the wall. There, in the warm litter about the melons, very cunningly hidden, he found twenty-five eggs, about the size of a bantam's eggs, but with whitish skin instead of shell.

"I was not a day too soon," he said; for he could see the baby cobras curled up inside the skin, and he knew that the minute they were hatched they could each kill a man or a mongoose. He bit off the tops of the eggs as fast as he could, taking care to crush the young cobras, and turned over the litter from time to time to see whether he had missed any. At last there were only three eggs left, and Rikki-tikki began to chuckle to himself, when he heard Darzee's wife screaming:

"Rikki-tikki, I led Nagaina toward the house, and she has gone into the veranda, and — oh, come quickly — she means killing!"

Rikki-tikki smashed two eggs, and tumbled backward

down the melon bed with the third egg in his mouth, and scuttled to the veranda as hard as he could put foot to the ground. Teddy and his mother and father were there at early breakfast; but Rikki-tikki saw that they were not eating anything. They sat stone-still, and their faces were white. Nagaina was coiled up on the matting by Teddy's chair, within easy striking distance of Teddy's bare leg, and she was swaying to and fro singing a song of triumph.

“Son of the big man that killed Nag,” she hissed, “stay still. I am not ready yet. Wait a little. Keep very still, all you three. If you move I strike, and if you do not move I strike. Oh, foolish people, who killed my Nag!”

Teddy's eyes were fixed on his father, and all his father could do was to whisper, “Sit still, Teddy. You mustn't move. Teddy, keep still.”

Then Rikki-tikki came up and cried: “Turn round, Nagaina; turn and fight!”

“All in good time,” said she, without moving her eyes. “I will settle my account with you presently. Look at your friends, Rikki-tikki. They are still and white; they are afraid. They dare not move, and if you come a step nearer I strike.”

“Look at your eggs,” said Rikki-tikki, “in the melon bed near the wall. Go and look, Nagaina.”

The big snake turned half round and saw the egg on the veranda. “Ah-h! Give it to me,” she said.

Rikki-tikki put his paws one on each side of the egg, and his eyes were blood-red. “What price for a snake's egg? For a young cobra? For a young king-cobra? For

the last — the very last of the brood? The ants are eating all the others down by the melon bed.”

Nagaina spun clear round, forgetting everything for the sake of the one egg; and Rikki-tikki saw Teddy's father shoot out a big hand, catch Teddy by the shoulder and drag him across the little table with the teacups, safe and out of reach of Nagaina.

“Tricked! Tricked! Tricked! Rikk-tck-tck!” chuckled Rikki-tikki. “The boy is safe, and it was I — I — I that caught Nag by the hood last night in the bathroom.” Then he began to jump up and down, all four feet together, his head close to the floor. “He threw me to and fro, but he could not shake me off. He was dead before the big man blew him in two. I did it. Rikki-tikki-tck-tck! Come then, Nagaina. Come and fight with me. You shall not be a widow long.”

Nagaina saw that she had lost her chance of killing Teddy, and the egg lay between Rikki-tikki's paws. “Give me the egg, Rikki-tikki. Give me the last of my eggs, and I will go away and never come back,” she said, lowering her hood.

“Yes, you will go away, and you will never come back; for you will go to the rubbish heap with Nag. Fight, widow! The big man has gone for his gun! Fight!”

Rikki-tikki was bounding all around Nagaina, keeping just out of the reach of her stroke, his little eyes like hot coals. Nagaina gathered herself together and flung out at him. Rikki-tikki jumped up and backward. Again and again and again she struck, and each time her head



came with a whack on the matting of the veranda, and she gathered herself together like a watch spring. Then Rikki-tikki danced in a circle to get behind her, and Nagaina spun round to keep her head to his head, so that the rustle of her tail on the matting sounded like dry leaves blown along by the wind.

He had forgotten the egg. It still lay on the veranda, and Nagaina came nearer and nearer to it, till at last, while Rikki-tikki was drawing breath, she caught it in her mouth, turned to the veranda steps, and flew like an arrow down the path, with Rikki-tikki behind her. When the cobra runs for her life, she goes like a whiplash flicked across a horse's neck.

Rikki-tikki knew that he must catch her, or all the trouble would begin again. She headed straight for the long grass by the thornbush, and as he was running Rikki-tikki heard Darzee still singing his foolish little song of triumph. But Darzee's wife was wiser. She flew off her nest as Nagaina came along and flapped her wings about Nagaina's head. If Darzee had helped they might have turned her; but Nagaina only lowered her hood and went on. Still, the instant's delay brought Rikki-tikki up to her, and as she plunged into the rathole where she and Nag used to live, his little white teeth were clenched on her tail, and he went down with her — and very few mongooses, however wise and old they may be, care to follow a cobra into its hole. It was dark in the hole; and Rikki-tikki never knew when it might open out and give Nagaina room to turn and strike at him. He held on sav-

agely and struck out his feet to act as brakes on the dark slope of the hot, moist earth.

Then the grass by the mouth of the hole stopped waving, and Darzee said: "It is all over with Rikki-tikki! We must sing his death song. Valiant Rikki-tikki is dead! For Nagaina will surely kill him underground."

So he sang a very mournful song that he made up all on the spur of the minute, and just as he got to the most touching part the grass quivered again, and Rikki-tikki, covered with dirt, dragged himself out of the hole leg by leg, licking his whiskers. Darzee stopped with a little shout. Rikki-tikki shook some of the dust out of his fur and sneezed. "It is all over," he said. "The widow will never come out again." And the red ants that live between the grass stems heard him and began to troop down one after another to see if he had spoken the truth.

Rikki-tikki curled himself up in the grass and slept where he was — slept and slept till it was late in the afternoon, for he had done a hard day's work.

"Now," he said, when he awoke, "I will go back to the house. Tell the Coppersmith, Darzee, and he will tell the garden that Nagaina is dead."

The Coppersmith is a bird who makes a noise exactly like the beating of a little hammer on a copper pot; and the reason he is always making it is because he is the town crier to every Indian garden and tells all the news to everybody who cares to listen. As Rikki-tikki went up the path, he heard his "attention" notes like a tiny dinner gong and then the steady "*Ding-dong-tock!* Nag

is dead — *dong!* Nagaina is dead! *Ding-dong-tock!*" That set all the birds in the garden singing and the frogs croaking; for Nag and Nagaina used to eat frogs as well as little birds.

When Rikki got to the house, Teddy and Teddy's mother (she looked very white still, for she had been fainting) and Teddy's father came out and almost cried over him; and that night he ate all that was given him till he could eat no more and went to bed on Teddy's shoulder, where Teddy's mother saw him when she came to look late at night.

"He saved our lives and Teddy's life," she said to her husband. "Just think, he saved all our lives."

Rikki-tikki woke up with a jump, for all the mongooses are light sleepers.

"Oh, it's you," said he. "What are you bothering for? All the cobras are dead; and if they weren't I'm here."

Rikki-tikki had a right to be proud of himself; but he did not grow too proud, and he kept that garden as a mongoose should keep it, with tooth and jump and spring and bite, till never a cobra dared show its head inside the walls.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### What Do You Think?

1. What are some of the chief peculiarities of a mongoose?
2. What rehearsals of his great fight does Rikki have?
3. Why are Nag and Nagaina eager to get rid of the people?
4. What advantages does Rikki have in his fight with Nag that he does not have in his fight with Nagaina?

5. What help does Darzee's wife give Rikki-tikki-tavi?
6. Describe what Rikki sees as he rushes to the veranda after Darzee's wife.
7. In what ways does Rikki show his skill and courage in his fight with Nagaina?
8. Which would you prefer as a pet, a dog or a mongoose like Rikki-tikki-tavi?
9. How much of this story could be true, and how much is pure fairy tale? Would you like it better if it were told as a true story throughout, or do you think having the animals talk adds to your interest?

*If You Want to Write*

1. A letter that Teddy might have written a school friend telling of his adventure
2. A letter that Teddy's mother might have written a friend in England telling of what happened when she and her family moved into the bungalow
3. The Narrowest Escape I Ever Had
4. The Time My Dog Did Me a Good Turn

*If You Want to Read*

*Bambi*, Felix Salter (a story of a deer)

*The Jungle Book*, *The Second Jungle Book*, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, *Kim*, *Captains Courageous*, *Just-So Stories* (stories for younger children, but the kind of amusing stories that everybody of every age enjoys), Rudyard Kipling

(In the Mexican moving picture *The Story of Chico*, you can see an exciting battle between a snake and a bird that saves a boy's life.)

## MATCHES

by Viola Paradise

THE "Wild West" of our country has been the scene of many short stories, novels, and plays. Western stories are widely read; Western movies are always popular. You have already read in this collection two stories of the West, "Gold-Mounted Guns" and "'Truth is Stranger —.'"

Besides stories of adventure, everyone knows stories of the dangers and hardships encountered by the brave pioneers who settled our country. In this story you will find an up-to-date Western story with girls instead of men as the pioneers. As you read, notice the details telling you that this is a tale of modern times.

VIOLA PARADISE was born and educated in Chicago. She graduated from the University of Chicago. But though city born and bred, she has firsthand knowledge of the country she describes in "Matches." As a special government agent for the United States Children's Bureau, she investigated the lives of children, not only in the larger cities of the East, but also in the thinly settled lands of the West. Three months were spent in districts of Montana similar to the one described in the story.

After two years of this work for the government, Miss Paradise came to New York to begin a career as a writer. She has written poems, short stories, magazine articles, and novels.

## MATCHES

WEATHER is the villain of this story.

The early-morning March sun, careless and debonair, shone through scattered clouds upon the packing of nine persons into the seven-passenger auto stage, and upon the loading of the stage's trailer with miscellaneous articles for far-off ranchers and homesteaders and with the possessions of Frances Stead and Louise Elmhurst, the two girls who were setting out on the adventure of taking up land in the Great West.

As the stage began its journey along the Bison Skull Trail, the driver produced a crumpled letter.

"Lee Dodd gave me this for you girls."

Ladies [ran the letter] I wouldn't of let You Ladies buy my Relinkishment even for \$150\$, onley the Land agent Said you got some Capitle, enouf to go Home east Winters. This county aint no place for a Porr man or enybody specially Ladies after november But I fixed the Place clean for you and Dug some coal out a butte and Theres a pile of Sage brush ready that will keep fires for a while the Stove Draws good. I hauled a Barrel of water it is Froze now. You Haf to melt it. I here some Ladies done pretty good Once on a homestead and I hope you will.

Your Snerely [this was crossed out] Truley

Lee Dodd.

Dr. Calhoun, a tall, thin, clear-eyed young man, shared the back seat with the two young women. He studied

their faces as they deciphered the note. They looked game, both of them, though Miss Elmhurst, the dark one, had a dreamy, preoccupied manner. Miss Stead was sturdier. She had deep-blue eyes, high color, smooth light hair, and a clear voice — clean-cut and quick, yet soft.

“Lee Dodd discouraging you?” he asked.

“So you know him?” asked Frances.

“Next-door neighbor. That is, two miles from my place.”

Louise handed him the letter. “Is it as desolate as it sounds?”

It depended on the weather, the doctor replied. They should have waited till the middle or the end of April to begin their homesteading. March was tricky, a bad gamble. He himself stayed in the city through March. But with enough wood and coal and warm clothing they could manage.

Of the other passengers, two cowboys shared the driver's seat, while a crossroads storekeeper and a sheepherder shared the two small folding seats in the tonneau with a nervous fat man, whose ampleness spanned the space between the seats and abutted precariously upon their edges. As the car twisted and lurched in the frozen ruts of the trail, one side of the fat man would occasionally slip down and get wedged between the seats. The first time this happened, everybody laughed. “God, this is no time to laugh!” he exclaimed. “My wife may be



dying!" The laughter ceased, for it was known that he had come a hundred miles to get a doctor.

The stage bumped and twisted its way, in and out, among buttes and badlands of the vast empty country. The brown rolling plains, patched with drifts of old snow, dotted with cattle and sheep grazing in the more sheltered places, showed no hint of spring. The mottling of sunshine and cloud shadows brought out subtle colorings and relieved somewhat the threat of somberness. "It's the kind of country," thought Louise to herself, "that reaches out and gets hold of you, for all that it looks so inhospitable and uncompromising. It throws a spell and you belong to it."

Frances said, "This is going to be the kind of day that's crisp and cold about the edges and soft and warm in the middle."

"You a warranted weather prophet?" asked a cowboy.

"It takes a brave man to prophesy March weather out in this country!" said the doctor.

Whereupon the fat man queried anxiously, "You don't think the weather'll delay us?" To which a unanimous chorus of "Hope not" gave him dubious comfort.

But soon the fickle sun was cringing before a fierce, threatening wind, and the temperature began to drop. The driver put up the car's side curtains. Their isinglass patches were opaque with dust and mud. A neat circle, five inches in diameter, directly in front of the driver, was the only transparent part of the windshield. Deprived

of the landscape, the passengers' attention turned upon one another. But conversation did not flourish. The fat man's anguish, his impatience for more speed, his frequent appeals to the doctor for impossible assurances sat heavily upon the spirits of the company. He seemed to resent the doctor's interest in the two girls — as if that were delaying the car's progress.

The journey grew more and more uncomfortable. The trail became rougher, more twisting, with sudden dips and rises. The wind buffeted the car. The temperature fell steadily. The passengers shrank huddled into their wraps, stamped their feet, and rubbed their hands.

At noon, when they drew up at Halfway House, the fat man cried out, "God! This is no time to eat. Look at the weather! My wife —"

"Say!" exclaimed a hungry cowboy, "your baby ain't the only kid ever born in this country! Cut your groaning."

But the doctor interrupted curtly. "Pull in your teeth, Teddy. You're not married."

"Righto!" retorted the cowboy. "You ain't neither. I vote we let the girls decide."

Dinner was foregone.

About three in the afternoon the stage wrenched itself out of the trail ruts and turned onto the rough, trackless prairie.

"Your outfit's along here somewhere soon," said a cowboy.

The fat man groaned anew at the delay which this stop

meant. "Will it take long to get their things off the trailer?" he asked.

No, only a few minutes. Presently the stage stopped. Everyone got out of the car and bent against the wind to the task of unloading furniture and trunks and boxes. The fat man, helpless and awkward in his very eagerness to be of help, almost wept at the delay. This was less than five minutes, but the consciousness of a sick woman forty miles beyond made it seem a long time.

"Don't bother to untie anything!" exclaimed Frances. "We can do everything ourselves. Yes, we have tools, matches, everything. Yes, of course we can put up the beds!"

"I'm sorry," said the fat man gratefully, as he climbed into the car. "If it wasn't for my wife —"

"Yes, yes, all right, hurry off!"

And with shouts of "Good luck! We'll come and see you soon," the stage lurched away. Louise and Frances were alone with their property.

It was too cold to stay outside long enough to get the first proper impression of the little tar-paper shack. That it was a tiny black speck in the vast boundless landscape; that no other dwelling was in sight; that the wooden strips holding the tar paper in place were nailed on at neat intervals; that a small stovepipe stuck out of the curving roof at a rakish angle — these things they took in at a glance and called the place "cunning."

They hurried inside and threw their arms about each other.

"O Fran! it is really true! We're here. I never entirely believed it, even on the way!"

"Let's light the fire. I'm frozen brittle!" exclaimed Frances. "Now let's see. The matches are in the box marked food. You open that, while I start on the bedding."

"Here's the food box," replied Louise. "Wow! these tools are cold."

She pried open the lid of the box. The odor of coffee, the sight of many small boxes and cans, were heartening.

"No matches here," she said, blithely. "Have another guess."

"Oh, yes, they're there. You're probably looking for a small box. It's a big one — a year's supply. I saw him put it in myself."

At last, "Here it is." Then, "No, this is too heavy. It's soap."

"Can't be," replied Fran. "The soap's in a box by itself." Yet she left the case she was unpacking and came over to inspect the box where the matches should have been.

"Why, we didn't order that kind of soap!" she exclaimed. "Besides, how absurd to pack soap with food! It's a mistake. The matches *must* be in this box, for I told him to put them there, so that we could have a fire and food as soon as we got here. The box is the same size —"

Here Frances broke off and caught a quick breath, disturbed at a sudden memory; for when she was ordering

the groceries, a woman from a laundry had come hurrying into the store for some soap. And Frances, because her order was a long one and would take some time, had let the grocer wait on the other woman. What if the grocer had sent the matches to the woman — Her heart gave a sudden turn, but her mind darted away from the fear.

“He must have packed the matches in another box,” she said. “We’ll have to open them all, till we come to them.”

“I move we have a cup of tea, first,” said Louise.

“Righto! I’ll chop some ice from the frozen water barrel, and we can melt — ”

At that moment it flashed upon them both that fire was essential to tea. They laughed, Frances a bit hollowly. Louise, not realizing *that there might not be any matches*, enjoyed the joke.

“It’s like the Walrus and the Carpenter! ‘And this was very odd, because there weren’t any matches.’ I’ll have to write that to Jim. He’s probably sizzling down there on his old Equator. Just think, Fran, what nice warm work building bridges over the Equator must be!”

Jim was the man Louise was to marry, after his engineering exploit was finished. And every experience was something to write to Jim. Frances sometimes thought that Louise lived entirely as a sort of preface, savoring life only as it could be passed on to Jim.

Although their feet and fingers ached with cold, and every breath was visible in the chill room, the exercise of

unpacking warmed them a little. They worked with their outdoor wraps on. By half-past four it was beginning to get dark. Despite the cold, Louise seemed in high spirits.

“‘Adventure One — The Mislaid Match,’” she said. “Good title for a story. O Fran, why don’t we write our adventures? The ride out was almost an adventure, with the poor worried fat man. I hope they got to his wife in time. It would be awful to get sick out here. I’m glad we’re both husky, although it would be convenient for the present to have a delicate appetite. If we don’t find the matches soon, I’ll begin on raw food. You know we had no lunch.”

Frances was weighing the possibility of not finding the matches. Half an hour would bring darkness. The beds had not been put up yet. She wanted to hide her fear from Louise. “At least,” she said, “we’ll have that nice doctor for our neighbor. I like the way his ears set. . . . Maybe we ought to begin on raw food and get one bed ready before dark, in case the matches don’t turn up until tomorrow.”

The stiff-frozen bread crumbled when they cut it. The beans and sardines they opened were frozen solid.

“I knew it was cold, but I didn’t realize it was *this* cold!” said Louise, as they broke the frozen food into small chunks. “You suck a bean and a sardine till they melt; then you slip them between your chattering teeth, and the temperature does the rest. Quite a technique! This is an adventure!”

But despite their hunger, they could eat very little of the frozen food. They turned greedily, however, to some cakes of chocolate.

"What next?" asked Louise. "We can't wash the dishes without water. Besides, it's too dark to do anything. I move we shiver to bed and get warm. Oh, I say, we can't even wash ourselves or brush our teeth!"

"Lucky we thought of flannelette nightgowns," said Frances. "See, it's begun to snow!"

It was all but dark outside. A mad and furious wind drove fine snowflakes fiercely against their shack.

"How terrifying this would be on the lonely moors of England, in a Hardy novel!" exclaimed Louise.

Frances repressed an impulse to say that it was more terrifying here and now. She felt a little impatient with Louise's habit of interpreting everything for its literary value, or for its interest to Jim. But she remembered that Louise did not know about the woman who had interrupted her order when she was buying the matches, that Louise did not know that there might be no matches and the possibility of freezing to death was more than a literary contingency.

Undressing and slipping between the cold sheets was like a penance. But having had time to put up only one bed, they had piled all their bedding on it, and they counted on this extra covering, and on the heat from their bodies, to get them warm.

Waiting for warmth, they discussed the arrangement of the room. "Let's get it all fixed up tomorrow and

take some pictures, and I'll send them to Jim with the first person who goes by. Oh, Fran, I wish you had a Jim to be sending things to!"

"It is customary to wait till after marriage before patronizing and pitying your old-maid friends," laughed Frances. In her heart she was thinking, "Poor Louise! She has so much to live for. And poor Jim!" Aloud she continued, "The room is larger than I thought. What would you say were the dimensions?"

Louise guessed twenty-five by thirty. Frances laughed. "Never! Twenty-two by twenty-six at the most."

Louise said that rooms ought to come in figures divisible by five. They nonsensced on, waiting for warmth. Notwithstanding the number of covers, they were warm only where their bodies touched. Frances finally found courage to get out onto the icy floor, snatch their coats, furs, and sweaters, and pile these on top of the bed. She scrambled back under the covers, quaking with cold. The extra covering apparently had no effect.

After a few hours, Louise fell into a restless sleep. But black panic kept Frances awake. And when at last she could shake a part of her mind free of panic, she began weighing the possibilities of freezing to death: wondering how long it took; wondering if the weather would change; wondering if anyone would happen by their shack; wondering if, by any mad chance, the stage would come out of its course and go past their homestead on its way back to the city; wondering if, by striking two pieces of metal together, she could start a fire. Girl Scouts learned how to



do that. It was not as if it were a wet cold. Perhaps, if she cut some tiny shavings, and chopped them fine —

Would the doctor stop on his way back to the city? She had liked the doctor.

She knew she was in no way responsible for the accident. She had checked over all the supplies; the grocer had pointed to a package and had said, "Matches." Yet a feeling of responsibility troubled her. The idea of homesteading had been hers. She had suggested it to Louise as an interesting thing to do during Jim's absence. She had persuaded Louise's family that it was a safe and sane project. Somehow she must pull Louise through.

The other stage passengers had said they would come to see them soon. How soon? She hoped the doctor would be the first to come.

She tried to recall all the stories she had read about Arctic explorations. She could remember no details, only that one could stay alive for days, that after the pain came numbness, and then torpor. The thing to do, when numbness came, was to stay awake.

What would Louise say when she knew? However black the outlook, she must see that as long as possible Louise clung fast to hope.

When Louise awoke at daybreak, Frances had a plan. Louise should stay in bed while Frances opened the trunks and got out their warmest underwear. No need for two of them to fumble around in the cold room before they were dressed.

"By the way," Louise interrupted, "can't you do a little weather prophesying today? You were right about the edges, yesterday, but it certainly was not soft and warm in the middle."

Frances lifted her head from the pillow to look out the window. "Why, there's nothing but snow in the world. It's drifted up to our window sill. If the sun comes out we'll have a great dazzle!"

"That's a safe prophecy," laughed Louise. "I could do almost as well myself. But keep your head down close to the pillow. A hurricane has just intruded. I suppose I have feet, but I can hardly feel them."

They lay awhile, shivering, yet savoring the few patches of warmth their bodies made, not daring to change their positions, for fear of contact with a cold part of the bed. Frances delayed the getting up as long as possible; every moment's delay was just one moment's more hope for Louise. For herself, too. After all, there might be matches. She had traveled far from the fierce fear that there might not be any to the faint hope of the opposite — a hard downward traveling. At the bottom of the road stood despair, beckoning. Louise, luckily, had not yet passed even the first signpost of fear. Extremely uncomfortable, she was taking a perverse enjoyment in her discomfort; it would make a good story.

Frances insisted that they each put on three suits of underwear and three pairs of stockings; Louise thought the idea absurd, for they would surely find the matches presently, but she consented. That too would make a

good tale to write to Jim. Frances then suggested that one of them look for the matches while the other put things away and set the house in order. In the present confusion one could never be quite sure whether or not a box had been searched for the matches. Besides, a neighbor might drop in any moment.

So, after a breakfast of bread and butter and sweet chocolate, they set to work, Louise hunting for matches, Frances putting things away, arranging their belongings, and frequently calling Louise from her task for advice, or to help move something heavy, or to hand Frances some tool as she stood perched on the convertible chair-step-ladder, hanging the gay chintz curtains.

Lee Dodd had left the shack neat and clean. Save for the brightly polished stove, it had been empty. But in the course of her explorations Frances found on a high shelf a baby's shoe and a lady's pink garter — food for speculation. (This should keep them talking quite a while.) They had assumed Lee Dodd's bachelorhood. Was there, then, a Mrs. Lee Dodd?

But in the midst of the discussion Louise stopped short.

“Fran!”

And Frances, though she knew what was coming, asked, “What?”

“What if the grocer made a mistake? What if — O Fran — what if there aren't any matches?”

“Have you looked everywhere?”

“No; but what if —”

"Don't be morbid. Time enough to consider that after we've done hunting."

Louise did not answer.

"Want to change jobs?" asked Frances.

No, Louise preferred to do the unpacking and to keep on searching.

"I wonder if it can be much colder outside," said Frances later, when for a few moments they left their tasks to take some calisthenic exercises. Their faces as well as their hands and feet ached with the cold.

They opened the door. The snow, drifted halfway to the knob, was frozen stiff. Frances got a shovel, planning to make a path, but the wind-packed snow was too hard. She stepped up on the snow, rather gingerly at first; but it bore her weight. Suddenly she saw a thermometer. Twelve below zero. The wind had fallen. The out-of-doors seemed no colder than the house.

They walked a little way from their house and looked about. There was nothing between them and the horizon. Not a tree, not a landmark. Only a rolling whiteness, blank, unfeatured, under a gray crouching sky. Only a terrible stillness that muffled hope.

Silently they returned to the house. Frances wished passionately for some word that would not sound like an empty reassurance to a frightened child.

The shack, though as cold as outside, had a different smell. Not a particularly pleasant smell, yet, suggesting shelter, it was welcome. They closed the door and returned to their tasks.

At last everything had been searched; everything was

in order. Except for a comment now and then as to where some object should be placed, there had been little conversation since their walk. At noon they stopped for food.

Louise tried a joke. "Now for the groaning board!" Then suddenly she was weeping. "I'm so cold! So terribly, terribly cold! Except my feet — they're burning hot and pricking and itching, and I want to scream! Oh, Jim would be so worried if he knew!"

"Scream, dear, scream. Let's have the comfort of screaming, if we wish, and of saying what we are thinking."

"Your feet, too?"

"Not yet."

"How long have you known — have you feared?"

"Since yesterday." And Frances told about the woman who had interrupted her to order the soap.

"O Fran, dear Fran! And you didn't tell me. You — you wanted me to have hope, to cling to hope, as long as possible? O Fran!"

There was relief in weeping. Even Frances, the strong, the steady, welcomed the dear relief of tears.

Then they faced the situation. What should be done? What were the chances?

There were two chances. Someone might come. Probably the doctor would stop on his way back to the city. And someone else would surely come in time. It would be a matter of endurance until someone should come.

"We have food enough to keep us alive a long time.

We'll be awfully uncomfortable," said Frances, "but as long as we're uncomfortable, we're safe. The danger doesn't really set in until we begin to get numb. Then we'll have to keep each other awake, taking turns at sleeping, and while one of us sleeps the other will have to rub her arms and legs to keep them from freezing. This may not be the scientific way, but perhaps it will work."

"And the other chance?" asked Louise.

"Oh, it's the faintest hope. I've wanted to try all day, but it was so suggestive of despair. We might try striking two pieces of metal together and make a spark. But it's such a thin little shaving of a hope."

Louise's spirits lifted. If Girl Scouts had done it, surely Frances, the clever competent Frances, could do it.

They tore tissue paper into tiny shreds and whittled pieces of dry sagebrush. Then they arranged these scraps in the dishpan and, a little awed, got the poker and a screwdriver.

"We ought to have a fire-worshippers' chant, to start the thing off," said Louise. She had found laughter again. "If Jim could see us now!"

But the hope petered out. Occasionally a spark fell into the fuel, but the longed-for combustion did not occur. After an hour they gave it up.

Then Frances said, suddenly, "We must rub your feet with snow or ice. I had forgotten. That's the thing to do for chilblains! We'll chop some of that frozen snow into small bits."

Louise at first protested. Quaking with cold, she

cringed at the thought of cold snow on her feet and legs. But she was surprised, when Frances applied the snow, to find that it felt like warm water on her feet. Blessed discovery! They rubbed their ears, their faces, their fingers, with the snow. It gave them a measure of easement.

That night they went to bed with all their clothes on, including woolen caps. They decided that it was safe for them both to risk sleeping that night. They ate as much supper as they could force themselves to swallow, trying frozen ham this time. And they went through all the physical exercises they could think of before retiring. Both beds were up now, but they slept together for the added warmth.

From the bed — it was still light — they surveyed the room.

"It is attractive!" exclaimed Louise, her eye taking in the cheery chintz curtains, the two comfortable willow chairs, with cushions of the same material, the unpainted deal table, with its brown desk blotter, some writing materials, and a soft brown-shaded lamp.

"Some day," said Frances, "we'll paint that, and the desk chair, and the bookshelves, a deep rich creamy color, to match the chiffonier and the mirror. Shall we paint the dining-room table, too, or shall we leave it as it is?"

The "dining-room table" stood toward the back of the room near the stove, a strip of Russian peasant embroidery and two squat brass candlesticks, with orange candles, "lending it tone between meals," according to

Louise. Hanging along the wall near the stove, bright red pots and pans added cheer to the room. A folding screen concealed the trunks and empty boxes. Two or three braided rugs lay on the rough unfinished floor. Yes, even in the fading light, it was attractive.

But the cold, the aching cold. Notwithstanding their talk of painting furniture and getting some gaily colored prints for the walls, their hearts were chilled and preoccupied, Louise's with anxiety for Jim, and Frances's —

"Why," thought Frances, "Why is that doctor always in my mind? Anyone could rescue us. Anyone with a match. It need not be the doctor." Yet it was of the doctor that she thought most often.

Somehow the night was lived through. Frances, having lain awake the previous night, snatched bits of dream-troubled sleep. A fat man in a machine was trying to prevent one of the cowboys from amputating her feet with the screwdriver. "This is no time to be tending to chilblains!" the fat man was crying. "My wife may be dying!" And the cowboy answered — only he had the doctor's voice, "Pull in your teeth, Fatty. Let the lady decide about her own feet." "I'm sorry to detain you," Frances replied, "but he must cut off my feet."

"The craziest dream!" she exclaimed to Louise as she woke and recounted it. "And the most absurd part was that I actually wanted him to do it and that the sensation was pleasurable. When he got through he handed the feet to the other cowboy and told him to put them in the closet next to the dancing slippers. Then he took



my temperature, shouted, 'Up to normal!' and they all rushed out. Then I woke up, and my feet are burning and itching like the deuce!"

Louise found no sleep that night. She stayed awake with her fear and with a resolve "to live up to Frances" to the end. Would rescue come? Poor Jim! she thought. And more often than she knew, she said it aloud.

The next day they tried an experiment. They walked in opposite directions from the house, as far as they could, having agreed not to go out of sight of the house or of each other. Possibly they could see some other dwelling. "Which way does he live?" thought Frances, gazing around at the unanswering horizon. Nothing came of the undertaking. They returned exhausted, scarcely able to articulate, so stiff were their faces from the wind.

They tried to read, but could not hold a book. Moreover, their own thoughts seemed more important than anything they could find in books.

They took turns rubbing each other's feet with snow.

"Jim will be so worried!" exclaimed Louise for the hundredth time. "He'll think something terrible has happened."

They stayed in bed most of the next day. If only the doctor would come!

Soon they lost track of time. They did not know how many days they had been alone. They only knew that the sun had not shone, that the sky was lowering and gray, that sometimes it snowed, that the thermometer —

now their only immediate interest — wavered between twenty and forty below, that the wind raged and fell and raged again.

They began to feel numb. Pain ceased. It was as if drowsiness were breathed down upon them.

"We mustn't let ourselves sleep!" exclaimed Frances. "We must not!"

Then a wonderful thing happened. The long deep silence was broken. A sound was heard outside.

A sheep, a weak staggering sheep, bleated outside their door.

"Poor thing!" they exclaimed. "Poor helpless little thing! Strayed from the fold, literally."

And suddenly they were overwhelmed with tears of pity for the sheep. Once more their tears were like a gift.

They coaxed the sheep inside and tried to feed it bread, but it was too weak to eat.

"But it's still warm!" exclaimed Louise, as she hugged the animal close. "Come, get near it. Feel here, under the fur, Fran; it's warm!"

Then Frances had an idea. It was a fearsome thought, loathsome, but it might help.

"Could you help me do something terrible, Louise? Could you keep your nerve? It might keep us going a few days longer. Someone is bound to come soon. We — we must kill it and drink its blood."

"O Fran!"

Yet they did it. Louise, her face averted, held the

helpless creature as Frances cut its throat. Crying, they drank the blood — all of it.

Then the desire for sleep was on them again, a terrible passion, a fierce hunger, a thing not to be withstood.

“Let’s give up, Fran. Let’s write our farewells and go to bed.”

Scarcely able to hold a pen, Louise wrote a few lines to Jim.

My dearest, if I could only spare you this anguish! There was an accident: no matches were packed with our things. We are freezing to death. Here is my love, all of it. And my arms about you.

Frances found she wanted to write to no one but the doctor. But that was too absurd a whim to be indulged. Instead, she wrote to Jim — a longer letter than Louise’s. She told him how much Louise’s love for him had saved her from anguish. She told, too, in some detail, of their experience: their fight against the weather; how they had killed the sheep and drunk its blood; how they had hoped for rescue. “We thought a certain doctor, who had come out on the stage with us, might stop here on his way back, and we hoped, and then wished passionately, for his coming.” Frances paused here. Should she allow herself the luxury of that impersonal statement?

She let it stand. She could not have written the letter over again. She could scarcely finish it, as it was, for sleepiness, yet she goaded herself to the end. She left

it open on the table, weighting it with a volume of Conrad. "Rather fitting!" she thought. Then she wrote on a large sheet of paper, "We have no matches and are freezing to death" and nailed this to the outside of the door. She read the thermometer. Twenty below.

Every movement required tremendous effort, nightmare effort. Yet, coming back into the room, she looked around, walked back to the "dining-room table," and straightened the strip of Russian embroidery that had fallen awry. "Now I guess we're shipshape."

Then, as she got into bed, she said to Louise, "Can you endure to take the cap off your head for a few minutes? If we pull our hair down over our faces it may keep our noses from freezing."

"Kiss me," said Louise sleepily; and Frances held her close. "I love you, Fran, so much — next to Jim."

"I love you, too. Funny how we don't say these things in life. I mean —"

"I know," Louise replied drowsily. And then, "If only Jim were here!"

Then, still in a close embrace, they yielded themselves to sleep.

After ten weatherbound days in the soddy of the grief-stricken fat man, after helping to dig through the snow and into the fire-thawed earth to make a grave for the fat man's wife and baby, after helping him to put a rude fence about the lonely grave to keep the cattle from tramping over it, Dr. Calhoun set out on horseback for Sweet-

weather, the stage terminus. If the stage would risk the deep snow, now beginning to soften under the long-truant sun, he would stop to see how "those girls" had weathered the blizzard and the bitter weather. They had been on his mind. Nothing could have happened to them, really. Healthy, capable girls—especially Miss Stead—and much better equipped for cold weather, doubtless, than many homesteaders. Still, they were new to the country. Had they brought all they needed?

At Sweetweather, where the doctor spent the night, the stage-driver was emphatic: the stage would not start till after the weather had "set." He tried to dissuade the doctor from going on ahead on horseback. "Them girls are all right. And you can't trust this sun. But if you're set on going, I'll stop for you at your place."

Yet the doctor ventured on. "Stop at the girls' first," he said.

The trip was far more laborious than he had expected. The horse plodded painfully through the snow. Once he shied before a queer series of lumpy mounds. The doctor dismounted and scraped into the snow with his spur, which finally struck something hard. Further investigation proved it to be a sheep, frozen to death, one of a whole flock which, pressed close together, had frozen there.

"The spring should be coming, and there seems nothing but death in the land," he said and shook himself, as if to throw off the thought of death. "Of course," he added, "those girls are all right."

The light was falling when he spied the little black shack. He whistled; he had expected to see the smoke first, for the wind was coming from the direction of the house. And there was the shack and no smoke. What could have happened? He spurred his horse. Soon he could see the white paper on the door.

There was hope, a ghost of hope. Their hearts were still beating. He lighted a lamp and placed it as far from the bed as possible. "Lucky a doctor found them," he said between his teeth as he set to work. "Some fool might have lighted a fire at once."

With great difficulty he disentwined the two bodies and removed the clothing, being careful to avoid a sudden jerky movement. So frozen were their fingers and toes that an awkward manipulation might easily break them off. He poured brandy down their throats. Then he brought in snow and packed it about their arms and legs, and moving their hair, which had caked with ice from their frozen breath, he packed the soft snow on their faces. The rest of their bodies had escaped frostbite.

But their limbs looked dead. Perhaps they could not be saved. Still, he remembered an account in a medical journal of a man exposed four days, one of whose limbs had been apparently dead, but who, after seventy hours of careful treatment, had been able to walk about with nothing worse than a frostbite on his heel. He remembered the treatment. The frozen leg had been bathed in ice-cold water for two hours and then enveloped in furs.

Then there had been friction with the feathery side of a bird skin, then with snow. The treatment had been continuous for twenty-four hours. The temperature of the room had been gradually raised, with lamps.

He looked about the room for some substitute for the bird skin and for the first time saw the open letters on the table. The sheep incident fed his hopes: they had had something with real food value. "They're plucky. And they certainly used their heads!" he said aloud. He could use the sheep's skin. But before he turned to look for the sheep, his eye took in the next sentence of the letter: "We thought a certain doctor, who had come out on the stage with us, might stop here on his way back, and we hoped, and then wished passionately, for his coming."

Perhaps, then, she had been drawn to him as he had to her? But, no, that was sheer fatuousness. Of course a doctor would be the person hoped for. Nevertheless the depression which had weighed him down since morning lifted. He forgot his weariness. He knew only that there was a hard fight ahead and that against a million odds, with all his heart and all his science, he would fight it.

He must do more than save their lives. He must save their arms and legs and ears and noses. He must fight against the coming of Arctic fever, pneumonia, gangrene, erysipelas.

He worked all night, watching anxiously for signs of returning consciousness. Toward morning Louise's eyelids flickered.

Then there really was hope! He had said it over and over to himself, but only now did he really believe it. His spirit was upborne. Now if only Frances would give some sign.

Hours passed, yet Frances gave no sign. He worked on, ceaselessly, first on one, then on the other. Louise woke and slept and woke and slept. Once she spoke.

"Frances?"

"She'll come around." And he willed it with all his might.

At night the miracle happened. Frances's eyes, half-open, heavy, uncomprehending, were idly upon him. He stopped and caught his breath. The eyes opened wider, and — as if her mind as well as her vision were gathered into focus — they felt out toward him with question and with understanding.

An ecstasy of thanksgiving gushed up in his heart. He turned his head away. Then he pulled himself together and went on with his work.

Three sunny, thawing days passed before they heard the welcome sound of the chugging stage. The doctor was still at work, never having stopped to sleep. And now complete recovery, though not yet achieved, was assured.

He had never once been conscious of exhaustion; but when the stage-driver came into the room, an ally from the outside world, Dr. Calhoun said only, "Get some woman," sank into a chair, and was at once asleep.

Frances and Louise explained — they had long since



regained speech — and the driver started off at once for a neighbor.

“I’m glad he doesn’t snore,” said Frances, absently. “Does Jim?”

“Why, what a question!” Louise stopped a gasping moment; then, “Oh, Fran!”

“What utter nonsense! What do you mean? How absurd! Why, I hardly know the man! Besides — ” She broke off. Then, with apparent irrelevance, “Oh, Louise, I do wish you had your Jim here.”

Louise laughed out loud. “It is customary, I believe, to wait till after marriage, and it is only decent to wait till after the engagement, before patronizing one’s old-maid friends!”

Well, here was a tale, oh, what a tale, to write to Jim!

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. Why have Louise and Frances come West? In what spirit have they come?
2. What is their house like?
3. In what ways do the two girls differ?
4. What is responsible for their plight?
5. What would a well-trained Boy or Girl Scout have done in their place? What methods do they follow to try to save their lives?
6. Why do they not try to walk to the doctor’s house if he lives only two miles away?
7. Why does he wait ten days before coming to see them?
8. Why does the doctor say upon seeing the girls, “Lucky a doctor found them”?

9. What are some of the methods he uses to revive them?
10. What is a soddy? a tar-paper shack?
11. What details show that this is a modern Western story?
12. What details make you realize the author's thorough knowledge of the hardships and dangers of the country?
13. What other stories of homesteaders in the West have you read or seen pictured in the movies? What comparisons could you make between them and this story?

*If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. Louise's letter to Jim, telling of her adventure
2. How to Build a Fire without Matches
3. How to Revive a Drowning Person (Your Boy or Girl Scout manual will help you to find material for these last two assignments.)

*If You Want to Read*

- "Turkey Red," Frances Gilchrist Wood  
My Antonia, Willa Cather  
Maria Chapdelaine, Louis Hémon  
"The Steel Trap," Rufus Steele  
"The Bamboo Trap," Robert S. Lemmon  
Alone, Richard Byrd (the early chapters describing his fight against the cold)  
"To Light a Fire," Jack London

## A FRIEND OF NAPOLEON

by Richard Connell

BEFORE the days of movies, every visitor to New York City would go to the Eden Musée to see life-size wax figures of historical characters or of people whose names graced or, perhaps more often, disgraced the headlines of the newspapers. Then movies became popular and forced the waxworks to close. In 1912 Richard Connell was sent as a reporter to write up the closing of the Eden Musée. He met a sad little man, one of the guards, who said that the wax figures were his only friends. Years later, in Paris, Mr. Connell visited a shabby little waxworks where he saw an old Frenchman devoutly dusting a faded figure of Napoleon. In reading "A Friend of Napoleon," you will see how, with the addition of the love affair of two attractive young people, these two visits to a waxworks show are woven into a short story.

WHILE still a boy in high school, Richard Connell began writing for his father's daily newspaper in Poughkeepsie, New York. Like nearly every high-school boy, he was interested in sports, and he became the sports editor. He also contributed occasional short stories and, before he went to college, was city editor for a while. At Harvard he was editor of the humorous student magazine, *The Lampoon*, and editorial chairman of *The Crimson*, the daily newspaper of the university.

After his graduation he did reporting and wrote advertisements in New York City. When the World War broke out, he enlisted as a private. In the training camp he was editor of the 27th Division weekly magazine, *The Gas Attack*. Overseas with his regiment he saw some active service. When the war was over, he came back to America, went into advertising again, got married, and then turned to the writing of fiction. He tries to write twenty stories a year. He and his wife live sometimes in Paris and sometimes in the country in Connecticut.

## A FRIEND OF NAPOLEON

ALL Paris held no happier man than Papa Chibou. He loved his work — that was why. Other men might say — did say, in fact — that for no amount of money would they take his job; no, not for ten thousand francs for a single night. It would turn their hair white and give them permanent goose flesh, they averred. On such men Papa Chibou smiled with pity. What stomach had such zestless ones for adventure? What did they know of romance? Every night of his life Papa Chibou walked with adventure and held the hand of romance.

Every night he conversed intimately with Napoleon, with Marat and his fellow revolutionists, with Carpentier and Caesar, with Victor Hugo and Lloyd George, with Foch, and with Bigarre, the Apache murderer whose unfortunate penchant for making ladies into curry led him to the guillotine, with Louis XVI and with Madame Lablanche, who poisoned eleven husbands and was working to make it an even dozen when the police deterred her, with Marie Antoinette and with sundry early Christian martyrs who lived in sweet resignation in electric-lighted catacombs under the sidewalk of the Boulevard des Capucines in the very heart of Paris. They were all his friends and he had a word and a joke for each of them, as on his nightly rounds he washed their faces and dusted out their ears, for Papa Chibou was night watchman at the Musée Pratoucy — “The World in Wax. Admission,

one franc. Children and soldiers, half-price. Nervous ladies enter the Chamber of Horrors at their own risk. One is prayed not to touch the wax figures or to permit dogs to circulate in the establishment."

He had been at the Musée Pratoency so long that he looked like a wax figure himself. Visitors not infrequently mistook him for one and poked him with inquisitive fingers or canes. He did not undeceive them; he did not budge. Spartanlike he stood stiff under the pokes; he was rather proud of being taken for a citizen of the world of wax, which was, indeed, a much more real world to him than the world of flesh and blood. He had cheeks like the small red wax pippins used in table decorations, round eyes, slightly poppy, and smooth white hair, like a wig. He was a diminutive man and, with his horseshoe mustache of surprising luxuriance, looked like a gnome going to a fancy-dress ball as a small walrus. Children who saw him flitting about the dim passages that led to the catacombs were sure he was a brownie.

His title "Papa" was a purely honorary one, given him because he had worked some twenty-five years at the museum. He was unwed and slept at the museum in a niche of a room just off the Roman arena where papier-mâché lions and tigers breakfasted on assorted martyrs. At night, as he dusted off the lions and tigers, he rebuked them sternly for their lack of delicacy.

"Ah," he would say, cuffing the ear of the largest lion, which was earnestly trying to devour a grandfather and an infant simultaneously, "sort of a pig that you are! I am

ashamed of you, eater of babies. You will go to hell for this, Monsieur Lion, you may depend upon it. Monsieur Satan will poach you like an egg, I promise you. Ah, you bad one, you species of a camel, you Apache, you profiteer — ”

Then Papa Chibou would bend over and very tenderly address the elderly martyr who was lying beneath the lion's paws and exhibiting signs of distress and say, “Patience, my brave one. It does not take long to be eaten, and then, consider: The good Lord will take you up to heaven, and there, if you wish, you yourself can eat a lion every day. You are a man of holiness, Phillibert. You will be Saint Phillibert, beyond doubt, and then won't you laugh at lions! ”

Phillibert was the name Papa Chibou had given to the venerable martyr; he had bestowed names on all of them. Having consoled Phillibert, he would softly dust the fat wax infant whom the lion was in the act of bolting.

“Courage, my poor little Jacob,” Papa Chibou would say. “It is not every baby that can be eaten by a lion, and in such a good cause too. Don't cry, little Jacob. And remember: When you get inside Monsieur Lion, kick and kick and kick! That will give him a great sickness of the stomach. Won't that be fun, little Jacob? ”

So he went about his work, chatting with them all, for he was fond of them all, even of Bigarre the Apache and the other grisly inmates of the Chamber of Horrors. He did chide the criminals for their regrettable proclivities in the past and warn them that he would tolerate no such

conduct in his museum. It was not his museum, of course. Its owner was Monsieur Pratoucy, a long-necked, melancholy marabou of a man who sat at the ticket window and took in the francs. But, though the legal title to the place might be vested in Monsieur Protoucy, at night Papa Chibou was the undisputed monarch of his little wax kingdom. When the last patron had left and the doors were closed Papa Chibou began to pay calls on his subjects; across the silent halls he called greetings to them:

"Ah, Bigarre, you old rascal, how goes the world? And you, Madame Marie Antoinette, did you enjoy a good day? Good evening, Monsieur Caesar, aren't you chilly in that costume of yours? Ah, Monsieur Charlemagne, I trust your health continues to be of the best."

His closest friend of them all was Napoleon. The others he liked; to Napoleon he was devoted. It was a friendship cemented by the years, for Napoleon had been in the museum as long as Papa Chibou. Other figures might come and go at the behest of a fickle public, but Napoleon held his place, albeit he had been relegated to a dim corner.

He was not much of a Napoleon. He was smaller even than the original Napoleon, and one of his ears had come in contact with a steam radiator, and as a result it was gnarled into a lump the size of a hickory nut; it was a perfect example of that phenomenon of the prize ring, the cauliflower ear. He was supposed to be at St. Helena, and he stood on a papier-mâché rock, gazing out wistfully over



a nonexistent sea. One hand was thrust into the bosom of his long-tailed coat; the other hung at his side. Skin-tight breeches, once white but white no longer, fitted snugly over his plump bump of waxen abdomen. A Napoleonic hat, frayed by years of conscientious brushing by Papa Chibou, was perched above a pensive waxen brow.

Papa Chibou had been attracted to Napoleon from the first. There was something so forlorn about him. Papa Chibou had been forlorn, too, in his first days at the museum. He had come from Bouloire, in the south of France, to seek his fortune as a grower of asparagus in Paris. He was a simple man of scant schooling, and he had fancied that there were asparagus beds along the Paris boulevards. There were none. So necessity and chance brought him to the Museum Pratoucy to earn his bread and wine, and romance and his friendship for Napoleon kept him there.

The first day Papa Chibou worked at the museum Monsieur Pratoucy took him round to tell him about the figures.

"This," said the proprietor, "is Toulon, the strangler. This is Mademoiselle Merle, who shot the Russian duke. This is Charlotte Corday, who stabbed Marat in the bathtub; that gory gentleman is Marat." Then they had come to Napoleon. Monsieur Protoucy was passing him by.

"And who is this sad-looking gentleman?" asked Papa Chibou.

"Name of a name! Do you not know?"

"But no, monsieur."

"But that is Napoleon himself."

That night, his first in the museum, Papa Chibou went round and said to Napoleon, "Monsieur, I do not know with what crimes you are charged, but I, for one, refuse to think you are guilty of them."

So began their friendship. Thereafter he dusted Napoleon with especial care and made him his confidant. One night in his twenty-fifth year at the museum Papa Chibou said to Napoleon, "You observed those two lovers who were in here tonight, did you not, my good Napoleon? They thought it was too dark in this corner for us to see, didn't they? But we saw him take her hand and whisper to her. Did she blush? You were near enough to see. She is pretty, isn't she, with her bright dark eyes? She is not a French girl; she is an American; one can tell that by the way she doesn't roll her r's. The young man, he is French; and a fine young fellow he is, or I'm no judge. He is so slender and erect, and he has courage, for he wears the war cross; you noticed that, didn't you? He is very much in love, that is sure. This is not the first time I have seen them. They have met here before, and they are wise, for is this not a spot most romantic for the meetings of lovers?"

Papa Chibou flicked a speck of dust from Napoleon's good ear.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "it must be a thing most delicious

to be young and in love! Were you ever in love, Napoleon? No? Ah, what a pity! I know, for I, too, have had no luck in love. Ladies prefer the big, strong men, don't they? Well, we must help these two young people, Napoleon. We must see that they have the joy we missed. So do not let them know you are watching them if they come here tomorrow night. I will pretend I do not see."

Each night after the museum had closed, Papa Chibou gossiped with Napoleon about the progress of the love affair between the American girl with the bright dark eyes and the slender, erect young Frenchman.

"All is not going well," Papa Chibou reported one night, shaking his head. "There are obstacles to their happiness. He has little money, for he is just beginning his career. I heard him tell her so tonight. And she has an aunt who has other plans for her. What a pity if fate should part them! But you know how unfair fate can be, don't you, Napoleon? If only we had some money we might be able to help him, but I, myself, have no money, and I suppose you, too, were poor, since you look so sad. But attend: tomorrow is a day most important for them. He has asked her if she will marry him, and she has said that she will tell him tomorrow night at nine in this very place. I heard them arrange it all. If she does not come it will mean no. I think we shall see two very happy ones here tomorrow night, eh, Napoleon?"

The next night, when the last patron had gone and Papa Chibou had locked the outer door, he came to Napoleon, and tears were in his eyes.

"You saw, my friend?" broke out Papa Chibou. "You observed? You saw his face and how pale it grew? You saw his eyes and how they held a thousand agonies? He waited until I had to tell him three times that the museum was closing. I felt like an executioner, I assure you; and he looked up at me as only a man condemned can look. He went out with heavy feet; he was no longer erect. For she did not come, Napoleon; that girl with the bright dark eyes did not come. Our little comedy of love has become a tragedy, monsieur. She has refused him, that poor, that unhappy young man."

On the following night at closing time Papa Chibou came hurrying to Napoleon; he was aquiver with excitement.

"She was here!" he cried. "Did you see her? She was here, and she kept watching and watching; but, of course, he did not come. I could tell from his stricken face last night that he had no hope. At last I dared to speak to her. I said to her, 'Mademoiselle, a thousand pardons for the very great liberty I am taking, but it is my duty to tell you — he was here last night and he waited till closing time. He was all of a paleness, mademoiselle, and he chewed his fingers in his despair. He loves you, mademoiselle; a cow could see that. He is devoted to you; and he is a fine young fellow, you can take an old man's word for it. Do not break his heart, mademoiselle.'

She grasped my sleeve. 'You know him, then?' she asked. 'You know where I can find him?' 'Alas, no,' I said. 'I have only seen him here with you.' 'Poor boy!' she kept saying. 'Poor boy! Oh, what shall I do? I am in dire trouble. I love him, monsieur.' 'But you did not come,' I said. 'I could not,' she replied, and she was weeping. 'I live with an aunt; a rich tiger she is, monsieur, and she wants me to marry a count, a fat leering fellow who smells of attar of roses and garlic. My aunt locked me in my room. And now I have lost the one I love, for he will think I have refused him, and he is so proud he will never ask me again.' 'But surely you could let him know?' I suggested. 'But I do not know where he lives,' she said. 'And in a few days my aunt is taking me off to Rome, where the count is, and oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear—' And she wept on my shoulder. Napoleon, that poor little American girl with the bright dark eyes."

Papa Chibou began to brush the Napoleonic hat.

"I tried to comfort her," he said. "I told her that the young man would surely find her, that he would come back and haunt the spot where they had been happy, but I was telling her what I did not believe. 'He may come tonight,' I said, 'or tomorrow.' She waited until it was time to close the museum. You saw her face as she left; did it not touch you in the heart?"

Papa Chibou was downcast when he approached Napoleon the next night.

"She waited again till closing time," he said, "but he

did not come. It made me suffer to see her as the hours went by and her hope ebbed away. At last she had to leave, and at the door she said to me, 'If you see him here again, please give him this.' She handed me this card, Napoleon. See, it says, 'I am at the Villa Rosina, Rome. I love you. Nina.' Ah, the poor, poor young man. We must keep a sharp watch for him, you and I."

Papa Chibou and Napoleon did watch at the Musée Pratoucy night after night. One, two, three, four, five nights they watched for him. A week, a month, more months passed, and he did not come. There came instead one day news of so terrible a nature that it left Papa Chibou ill and trembling. The Musée Pratoucy was going to have to close its doors.

"It is no use," said Monsieur Pratoucy, when he dealt this blow to Papa Chibou. "I cannot go on. Already I owe much, and my creditors are clamoring. People will no longer pay a franc to see a few old dummies when they can see an army of red Indians, Arabs, brigands, and dukes in the moving pictures. Monday the Musée Pratoucy closes its doors forever."

"But, Monsieur Pratoucy," exclaimed Papa Chibou, aghast, "what about the people here? What will become of Marie Antoinette, and the martyrs, and Napoleon?"

"Oh," said the proprietor, "I'll be able to realize a little on them, perhaps. On Tuesday they will be sold at auction. Someone may buy them to melt up."

"To melt up, monsieur?" Papa Chibou faltered.

"But certainly. What else are they good for?"

"But surely monsieur will want to keep them, a few of them anyhow?"

"Keep them? Aunt of the devil, but that is a droll idea! Why should anyone want to keep shabby old wax dummies?"

"I thought," murmured Papa Chibou, "that you might keep just one—Napoleon, for example—as a remembrance—"

"Uncle of Satan, but you have odd notions! To keep a souvenir of one's bankruptcy!"

Papa Chibou went away to his little hole in the wall. He sat on his cot and fingered his mustache for an hour; the news had left him dizzy, had made a cold vacuum under his belt buckle. From under his cot, at last, he took a wooden box, unlocked three separate locks, and extracted a sock. From the sock he took his fortune, his hoard of big copper ten-centime pieces, tips he had saved for years. He counted them over five times most carefully; but no matter how he counted them he could not make the total come to more than two hundred and twenty-one francs.

That night he did not tell Napoleon the news. He did not tell any of them. Indeed he acted even more cheerful than usual as he went from one figure to another. He complimented Madame Lablanche, the lady of the poisoned spouses, on how well she was looking. He even had a kindly word to say to the lion that was eating the two martyrs.

"After all, Monsieur Lion," he said, "I suppose it is as proper for you to eat martyrs as it is for me to eat bananas. Probably bananas do not enjoy being eaten any more than martyrs do. In the past I have said harsh things to you, Monsieur Lion; I am sorry I said them, now. After all, it is hardly your fault that you eat people. You were born with an appetite for martyrs, just as I was born poor." And he gently tweaked the lion's papier-mâché ear.

When he came to Napoleon, Papa Chibou brushed him with unusual care and thoroughness. With a moistened cloth he polished the imperial nose, and he took pains to be gentle with the cauliflower ear. He told Napoleon the latest joke he had heard at the cabmen's café where he ate his breakfast of onion soup, and, as the joke was mildly improper, nudged Napoleon in the ribs, and winked at him.

"We are men of the world, eh, old friend?" said Papa Chibou. "We are philosophers, is that not so?" Then he added, "We take what life sends us, and sometimes it sends hardships."

He wanted to talk more with Napoleon, but somehow he couldn't; abruptly, in the midst of a joke, Papa Chibou broke off and hurried down into the depths of the Chamber of Horrors and stood there for a very long time staring at an unfortunate native of Siam being trodden on by an elephant.

It was not until the morning of the auction sale that Papa Chibou told Napoleon. Then, while the crowd was



gathering, he slipped up to Napoleon in his corner and laid his hand on Napoleon's arm.

"One of the hardshesses of life has come to us, old friend," he said. "They are going to try to take you away. But, courage! Papa Chibou does not desert his friends. Listen!" And Papa Chibou patted his pocket, which gave forth a jingling sound.

The bidding began. Close to the auctioneer's desk stood a man, a wizened, rodent-eyed man with a diamond ring and dirty fingers. Papa Chibou's heart went down like an express elevator when he saw him, for he knew that the rodent-eyed man was Mogen, the junk king of Paris. The auctioneer, in a voice slightly encumbered by adenoids, began to sell the various items in a hurried, perfunctory manner.

"Item 3 is Julius Caesar, toga and sandals thrown in. How much am I offered? One hundred and fifty francs? Dirt cheap for a Roman emperor, that is. Who'll make it two hundred? Thank you, Monsieur Mogen. The noblest Roman of them all is going at two hundred francs. Are you all through at two hundred? Going, going, gone! Julius Caesar is sold to Monsieur Mogen."

Papa Chibou patted Caesar's back sympathetically.

"You are worth more, my good Julius," he said in a whisper. "Good-by."

He was encouraged. If a comparatively new Caesar brought only two hundred, surely an old Napoleon would bring no more.

The sale progressed rapidly. Monsieur Mogen bought

the entire Chamber of Horrors. He bought Marie Antoinette and the martyrs and lions. Papa Chibou, standing near Napoleon, withstood the strain of waiting by chewing his mustache.

The sale was very nearly over, and Monsieur Mogen had bought every item, when, with a yawn, the auctioneer droned: "Now, ladies and gentlemen, we come to Item 573, a collection of odds and ends, mostly damaged goods, to be sold in one lot. The lot includes one stuffed owl that seems to have molted a bit; one Spanish shawl, torn; the head of an Apache who has been guillotined, body missing; a small wax camel, no humps; and an old wax figure of Napoleon, with one ear damaged. What am I offered for the lot?"

Papa Chibou's heart stood still. He laid a reassuring hand on Napoleon's shoulder.

"The fool," he whispered in Napoleon's good ear, "to put you in the same class as a camel, no humps, and an owl. But never mind. It is lucky for us, perhaps."

"How much for this assortment?" asked the auctioneer.

"One hundred francs," said Mogen, the junk king.

"One hundred and fifty," said Papa Chibou, trying to be calm. He had never spent so vast a sum all at once in his life.

Mogen fingered the material in Napoleon's coat.

"Two hundred," said the junk king.

"Are you all through at two hundred?" queried the auctioneer.

"Two hundred and twenty-one," called Papa Chibou. His voice was a husky squeak.

Mogen from his rodent eyes glared at Papa Chibou with annoyance and contempt. He raised his dirtiest finger—the one with the diamond ring on it—toward the auctioneer.

"Monsieur Mogen bids two hundred and twenty-five," droned the auctioneer. "Do I hear two hundred and fifty?"

Papa Chibou hated the world. The auctioneer cast a look in his direction.

"Two hundred and twenty-five is bid," he repeated. "Are you all through at two hundred and twenty-five? Going, going—sold to Monsieur Mogen for two hundred and twenty-five francs."

Stunned, Papa Chibou heard Mogen say casually, "I'll send round my carts for this stuff in the morning."

This stuff!

Dully and with an aching breast Papa Chibou went to his room down by the Roman arena. He packed his few clothes into a box. Last of all he slowly took from his cap the brass badge he had worn for so many years; it bore the words "Chief Watchman." He had been proud of that title, even if it was slightly inaccurate; he had been not only the chief but the only watchman. Now he was nothing. It was hours before he summoned up the energy to take his box round to the room he had rented high up under the roof of a tenement in a near-by alley. He knew he should start to look for another job at once,

but he could not force himself to do so that day. Instead, he stole back to the deserted museum and sat down on a bench by the side of Napoleon. Silently he sat there all night; but he did not sleep; he was thinking, and the thought that kept pecking at his brain was to him a shocking one. At last, as day began to edge its pale way through the dusty windows of the museum, Papa Chibou stood up with the air of a man who has been through a mental struggle and has made up his mind.

"Napoleon," he said, "we have been friends for a quarter of a century, and now we are to be separated because a stranger had four francs more than I had. That may be lawful, my old friend, but it is not justice. You and I, we are not going to be parted."

Paris was not yet awake when Papa Chibou stole with infinite caution into the narrow street beside the museum. Along this street toward the tenement where he had taken a room crept Papa Chibou. Sometimes he had to pause for breath, for in his arms he was carrying Napoleon.

Two policemen came to arrest Papa Chibou that very afternoon. Mogen had missed Napoleon, and he was a shrewd man. There was not the slightest doubt of Papa Chibou's guilt. There stood Napoleon in the corner of his room, gazing pensively out over the housetops. The police bundled the overwhelmed and confused Papa Chibou into the police patrol, and with him, as damning evidence, Napoleon.

In his cell in the city prison Papa Chibou sat with his

spirit caved in. To him jails and judges and justice were terrible and mysterious affairs. He wondered if he would be guillotined; perhaps not, since his long life had been one of blameless conduct; but the least he could expect, he reasoned, was a long sentence to hard labor on Devil's Island, and guillotining had certain advantages over that. Perhaps it would be better to be guillotined, he told himself, now that Napoleon was sure to be melted up.

The keeper who brought him his meal of stew was a pessimist of jocular tendencies.

"A pretty pickle," said the keeper; "and at your age too. You must be a very wicked old man to go about stealing dummies. What will be safe now? One may expect to find the Eiffel Tower missing any morning. Dummy-stealing! What a career! We have had a man in here who stole a trolley car, and one who made off with the anchor of a steamship, and even one who pilfered a hippopotamus from a zoo, but never one who stole a dummy—and an old one-eared dummy, at that! It is an affair extraordinary!"

"And what did they do to the gentleman who stole the hippopotamus?" inquired Papa Chibou tremulously.

The keeper scratched his head to indicate thought.

"I think," he said, "that they boiled him alive. Either that or they transported him for life to Morocco; I don't recall exactly."

Papa Chibou's brow grew damp.

"It was a trial most comical, I can assure you," went on the keeper. "The judges were Messieurs Bertouf, Gob-

lin, and Perouse — very amusing fellows, all three of them. They had fun with the prisoner; how I laughed. Judge Bertouf said, in sentencing him, 'We must be severe with you, pilferer of hippopotamuses. We must make of you an example. This business of hippopotamus-pilfering is getting all too common in Paris.' They are witty fellows, those judges."

Papa Chibou grew a shade paler.

"The Terrible Trio?" he asked.

"The Terrible Trio," replied the keeper cheerfully.

"Will they be my judges?" asked Papa Chibou.

"Most assuredly," promised the keeper, and strolled away humming happily and rattling his big keys.

Papa Chibou knew then that there was no hope for him. Even into the Musée Pratoucy the reputation of those three judges had penetrated, and it was a sinister reputation indeed. They were three ancient, grim men who had fairly earned their title, The Terrible Trio, by the severity of their sentences; evildoers blanched at their names, and this was a matter of pride to them.

Shortly the keeper came back; he was grinning.

"You have the devil's own luck, old-timer," he said to Papa Chibou. "First you have to be tried by The Terrible Trio, and then you get assigned to you as lawyer none other than Monsieur Georges Dufayel."

"And this Monsieur Dufayel, is he then not a good lawyer?" questioned Papa Chibou miserably.

The keeper snickered.

"He has not won a case for months," he answered, as

if it were the most amusing thing imaginable. "It is really better than a circus to hear him muddling up his clients' affairs in court. His mind is not on the case at all. Heaven knows where it is. When he rises to plead before the judges he has no fire, no passion. He mumbles and stutters. It is a saying about the courts that one is as good as convicted who has the ill luck to draw Monsieur Georges Dufayel as his advocate. Still, if one is too poor to pay for a lawyer, one must take what he can get. That's philosophy, eh, old-timer?"

Papa Chibou groaned.

"Oh, wait till tomorrow," said the keeper gaily. "Then you'll have a real reason to groan."

"But surely I can see this Monsieur Dufayel.

"Oh, what's the use? You stole the dummy, didn't you? It will be there in court to appear against you. How entertaining! Witness for the prosecution: Monsieur Napoleon. You are plainly as guilty as Cain, old-timer, and the judges will boil your cabbage for you very quickly and neatly, I can promise you that. Well, see you tomorrow. Sleep well."

Papa Chibou did not sleep well. He did not sleep at all, in fact, and when they marched him into the enclosure where sat the other nondescript offenders against the law he was shaken and utterly wretched. He was overawed by the great courtroom and the thick atmosphere of seriousness that hung over it.

He did pluck up enough courage to ask a guard, "Where is my lawyer, Monsieur Dufayel?"

"Oh, he's late, as usual," replied the guard. And then, for he was a waggish fellow, he added, "If you're lucky he won't come at all."

Papa Chibou sank down on the prisoners' bench and raised his eyes to the tribunal opposite. His very marrow was chilled by the sight of The Terrible Trio. The chief judge, Bertouf, was a vast puff of a man, who swelled out of his judicial chair like a poisonous fungus. His black robe was familiar with spilled brandy, and his dirty judicial bib was askew. His face was bibulous and brutal, and he had the wattles of a turkey gobbler. Judge Goblin, on his right, looked to have mummified; he was at least a hundred years old and had wrinkled parchment skin and red-rimmed eyes that glittered like the eyes of a cobra. Judge Perouse was one vast jungle of tangled grizzled whisker, from the midst of which projected a cockatoo's beak of a nose; he looked at Papa Chibou and licked his lips with a long pink tongue. Papa Chibou all but fainted; he felt no bigger than a pea, and less important; as for his judges, they seemed enormous monsters.

The first case was called, a young swaggering fellow who had stolen an orange from a pushcart.

"Ah, Monsieur Thief," rumbled Judge Bertouf with a scowl, "you are jaunty now. Will you be so jaunty a year from today when you are released from prison? I rather think not. Next case."

Papa Chibou's heart pumped with difficulty. A year for an orange — and he had stolen a man! His eyes roved



round the room, and he saw two guards carrying in something which they stood before the judges. It was Napoleon.

A guard tapped Papa Chibou on the shoulder. "You're next," he said.

"But my lawyer, Monsieur Dufayel —" began Papa Chibou.

"You are in hard luck," said the guard, "for here he comes."

Papa Chibou in a daze found himself in the prisoner's dock. He saw coming toward him a pale young man. Papa Chibou recognized him at once. It was the slender, erect young man of the museum. He was not very erect now; he was listless. He did not recognize Papa Chibou; he barely glanced at him.

"You stole something," said the young lawyer, and his voice was toneless. "The stolen goods were found in your room. I think we might better plead guilty and get it over with."

"Yes, monsieur," said Papa Chibou, for he had let go all his hold on hope. "But attend a moment. I have something — a message for you."

Papa Chibou fumbled through his pockets and at last found the card of the American girl with the bright dark eyes. He handed it to Georges Dufayel.

"She left it with me to give to you," said Papa Chibou. "I was chief watchman at the Musée Pratoucy, you know. She came there night after night, to wait for you."

The young man gripped the sides of the card with both

hands; his face, his eyes, everything about him seemed suddenly charged with new life.

"Ten thousand million devils!" he cried. "And I doubted her! I owe you much, monsieur. I owe you everything." He wrung Papa Chibou's hand.

Judge Bertouf gave an impatient judicial grunt.

"We are ready to hear your case, Advocate Dufayel," said the judge, "if you have one."

The court attendants sniggered.

"A little moment, monsieur the judge," said the lawyer. He turned to Papa Chibou. "Quick," he shot out, "tell me about the crime you are charged with. What did you steal?"

"Him," replied Papa Chibou, pointing.

"That dummy of Napoleon?"

Papa Chibou nodded.

"But why?"

Papa Chibou shrugged his shoulders.

"Monsieur could not understand."

"But you must tell me!" said the lawyer urgently. "I must make a plea for you. These savages will be severe enough, in any event; but I may be able to do something. Quick; why did you steal this Napoleon?"

"I was his friend," said Papa Chibou. "The museum failed. They were going to sell Napoleon for junk, Monsieur Dufayel. He was my friend. I could not desert him."

The eyes of the young advocate had caught fire; they

were lit with a flash. He brought his fist down on the table.

"Enough!" he cried.

Then he rose in his place and addressed the court. His voice was low, vibrant, and passionate; the judges, in spite of themselves, leaned forward to listen to him.

"May it please the honorable judges of this court of France," he began, "my client is guilty. Yes, I repeat in a voice of thunder, for all France to hear, for the enemies of France to hear, for the whole wide world to hear, he is guilty. He did steal this figure of Napoleon, the lawful property of another. I do not deny it. This old man, Jerome Chibou, is guilty, and I for one am proud of his guilt."

Judge Bertouf grunted.

"If your client is guilty, Advocate Dufayel," he said, "that settles it. Despite your pride in his guilt, which is a peculiar notion, I confess, I am going to sentence him to—"

"But wait, your honor!" Dufayel's voice was compelling. "You must, you shall hear me! Before you pass sentence on this old man, let me ask you a question."

"Well?"

"Are you a Frenchman, Judge Bertouf?"

"But certainly."

"And you love France?"

"Monsieur has not the effrontery to suggest otherwise?"

"No. I was sure of it. That is why you will listen to me."

"I listen."

"I repeat then: Jerome Chibou is guilty. In the law's eyes he is a criminal. But in the eyes of France and those who love her his guilt is a glorious guilt; his guilt is more honorable than innocence itself."

The three judges looked at one another blankly; Papa Chibou regarded his lawyer with wide eyes; Georges Dufayel spoke on.

"These are times of turmoil and change in our country, messieurs the judges. Proud traditions which were once the birthright of every Frenchman have been allowed to decay. Enemies beset us within and without. Youth grows careless of that honor which is the soul of a nation. Youth forgets the priceless heritages of the ages, the great names that once brought glory to France in the past, when Frenchmen were Frenchmen. There are some in France who may have forgotten the respect due a nation's great" — here Advocate Dufayel looked very hard at the judges — "but there are a few patriots left who have not forgotten. And there sits one of them.

"This poor old man has deep within him a glowing devotion to France. You may say that he is a simple, unlettered peasant. You may say that he is a thief. But I say, and true Frenchmen will say with me, that he is a patriot, messieurs the judges. He loves Napoleon. He loves him for what he did for France. He loves him because in Napoleon burned that spirit which has made

France great. There was a time, messieurs the judges, when your fathers and mine dared share that love for a great leader. Need I remind you of the career of Napoleon? I know I need not. Need I tell you of his victories? I know I need not."

Nevertheless, Advocate Dufayel did tell them of the career of Napoleon. With a wealth of detail and many gestures he traced the rise of Napoleon; he lingered over his battles; for an hour and ten minutes he spoke eloquently of Napoleon and his part in the history of France.

"You may have forgotten," he concluded, "and others may have forgotten, but this old man sitting here a prisoner — he did not forget. When mercenary scoundrels wanted to throw on the junk heap this effigy of one of France's greatest sons, who was it that saved him? Was it you, messieurs the judges? Was it I? Alas, no. It was a poor old man who loved Napoleon more than he loved himself. Consider, messieurs the judges; they were going to throw on the junk heap Napoleon — France's Napoleon — our Napoleon. Who would save him? Then up rose this man, this Jerome Chibou, whom you would brand as a thief, and he cried aloud for France and for the whole world to hear, 'Stop! Desecraters of Napoleon, stop! There still lives one Frenchman who loves the memories of his native land; there is still one patriot left. I, I, Jerome Chibou, will save Napoleon!' And he did save him, messieurs the judges."

Advocate Dufayel mopped his brow, and leveling an accusing finger at The Terrible Trio he said, "You may

send Jerome Chibou to jail. But when you do, remember this: You are sending to jail the spirit of France. You may find Jerome Chibou guilty. But when you do, remember this: You are condemning a man for love of country, for love of France. Wherever true hearts beat in French bosoms, messieurs the judges, there will the crime of Jerome Chibou be understood, and there will the name of Jerome Chibou be honored. Put him in prison, messieurs the judges. Load his poor feeble old body with chains. And a nation will tear down the prison walls, break his chains, and pay homage to the man who loved Napoleon and France so much that he was willing to sacrifice himself on the altar of patriotism."

Advocate Dufayel sat down; Papa Chibou raised his eyes to the judges' bench. Judge Perouse was ostentatiously blowing his beak of a nose. Judge Goblin, who wore a Sedan ribbon in his buttonhole, was sniffing into his inkwell. And Chief Justice Bertouf was openly blubbing.

"Jerome Chibou, stand up." It was Chief Judge Bertouf who spoke, and his voice was thick with emotion.

Papa Chibou, quaking, stood up. A hand like a hand of pink bananas was thrust down at him.

"Jerome Chibou," said Chief Judge Bertouf, "I find you guilty. Your crime is patriotism in the first degree. I sentence you to freedom. Let me have the honor of shaking the hand of a true Frenchman."

"And I," said Judge Goblin, thrusting out a hand as dry as autumn leaves.

"And I also," said Judge Perouse, reaching out a hairy hand.

"And, furthermore," said Chief Judge Bertouf, "you shall continue to protect the Napoleon you saved. I subscribe a hundred francs to buy him for you."

"And I," said Judge Goblin.

"And I also," said Judge Perouse.

As they left the courtroom, Advocate Dufayel, Papa Chibou, and Napoleon, Papa Chibou turned to his lawyer.

"I can never repay monsieur," he began.

"Nonsense!" said the lawyer.

"And would Monsieur Dufayel mind telling me again the last name of Napoleon?"

"Why, Bonaparte, of course. Surely you knew —"

"Alas, no, Monsieur Dufayel. I am a man the most ignorant. I did not know that my friend had done such great things."

"You didn't? Then what in the name of heaven did you think Napoleon was?"

"A sort of murderer," said Papa Chibou humbly.

Out beyond the walls of Paris in a garden stands the villa of Georges Dufayel, who has become, everyone says, the most eloquent and successful young lawyer in the Paris courts. He lives there with his wife, who has bright dark eyes. To get to his house one must pass a tiny gatehouse, where lives a small old man with a prodigious walrus mustache. Visitors who peer into the gatehouse as they pass sometimes get a shock, for standing in one

corner of its only room they see another small man, in uniform and a big hat. He never moves, but stands there by the window all day, one hand in the bosom of his coat, the other at his side, while his eyes look out over the garden. He is waiting for Papa Chibou to come home after his work among the asparagus beds to tell him the jokes and the news of the day.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. Why is Papa Chibou happy at the beginning of the story?
2. How does he find pleasure in his nightly task of dusting the wax figures?
3. Why is he attracted to Napoleon in the first place?
4. How many of the characters in the waxworks do you know about?
5. What do you learn about Papa Chibou himself from the fact that he asks whom the statue of Napoleon represents?
6. How much can you tell about Napoleon? (If you know something of his life, you will enjoy more the humor of Papa Chibou's conversations with the wax figure.)
7. Where does the story begin?
8. What happens on the fatal night of the story?
9. What duty does the dark-eyed American girl leave with Papa Chibou?
10. What terrible news now overwhelms Papa Chibou?
11. Speaking as though you were one of the bidders, tell what happens at the auction.
12. How does Papa Chibou excuse himself for his crime?
13. What makes his fate seem dark as he waits for his trial?



14. How do you account for the sudden change in the young lawyer's interest in his case? How does this change affect his ability to plead skillfully?
15. By what means does he win Papa Chibou's freedom? Compare this trial with the one in "The Trial in Tom Belcher's Store."
16. What gives a humorous twist to the end of the story?
17. What happens to all the characters after the trial is over?
18. Part of the enjoyment of reading stories is to picture clearly the people who take part in them. Reread the paragraph describing Papa Chibou's appearance, and see if you can picture him clearly. If you can draw, you might try drawing his picture as you imagine him.

#### *If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. Just before the museum closes forever, the figure of Napoleon comes to life on the stroke of midnight and tells another wax figure the story of the two lovers.
2. The young lawyer writes a letter to the American girl when he goes home after the trial.
3. Reread the descriptions of the people in the story for suggestions. Then try in just two or three sentences to give an equally vivid picture of someone you know. One interesting way to do this is to describe a classmate without giving his name. Then when the descriptions are read, try to guess who is the subject. You must, of course, be careful not to write anything that may hurt other people's feelings. If your classmates quickly recognize the portrait you have drawn, then you have been successful in using words that give a clear picture.

#### *If You Want to Read*

- "The Devil and Daniel Webster," Stephen Vincent Benét  
(a story of a trial)  
"Markheim," Robert Louis Stevenson  
"Farewell to Legs," P. G. Wodehouse

*Love Stories*

*Monsieur Beaucaire*, Booth Tarkington

"The Water Hole," Maxwell Struthers Burt

"Annie Laurie," Zona Gale

"The True Romance," Albert Payson Terhune

"Advice to the Lovelorn," Christopher Morley

"Wild Geese," Charles Caldwell Dobie

## THE KISKIS

by May Vontver

MANY stories have been written of poor children in the slums of our great cities, but perhaps fewer stories deal with poor children in the country. "The Kiskis" tells a sympathetic story of poor country children, who ask no help, but keep their pride and independence in spite of poverty, showing the true pioneer spirit that has contributed to the greatness of this nation.

MRS. VONTVER, the author of "The Kiskis," was formerly superintendent of education in one of the counties of Montana. She grew up as one of the nine children of a shoemaker in Sweden. Her father could tell stories entertainingly, but he was not interested in earning a living, and the family grew poorer and poorer. When her twenty-year-old brother came to this country to earn a living, Mrs. Vontver, then a little girl of twelve just out of grammar school, came with him. In a high school in Nebraska, even though she had difficulty in speaking English, she won high marks. She also had compositions published in the school paper.

At seventeen she began teaching school, and as soon as she could save any money at all, she started to buy a house for her mother. Though she was not earning much money, she managed to finish paying for the house in four years.

Both her mother and father were fond of reading and telling stories, and from the time when she could first read, Mrs. Vontver loved poetry and stories and wanted to write them herself.

Because she endured poverty herself, she was perhaps all the more able to write sympathetically of the Kiski children. This story, by the way, like "Guinea Pig," is a true story. Mrs. Vontver was the schoolteacher, and the Kiskis were her pupils.

## THE KISKIS

"HADN'T you better eat in the house today? It is cold outside," the teacher suggested.

Pretending not to hear her the three Kiskis slipped silently through the door with their double-handled Bull Durham tin can. They stood in a knot on the south side of the schoolhouse and ate from the one tin. From her desk Miss Smith observed that they now and then put one bare foot over the other to warm it. This was the second time they had disregarded her invitation to eat in the house with the others. The rest of the children had drawn their seats into a circle about the stove and begun to eat.

Teddy Kirk at last decided to enlighten the teacher: "They have only bread in their lunch pail. That's why they won't eat with us."

Miss Smith made no reply. She suspected that the lunches of the group around the stove weren't very sumptuous either. She knew hers wasn't. The people with whom she boarded were homesteaders, too.

"What about these Kiskis? Who are they?" she asked Mr. Clark that evening at supper.

"The Kiskis? — Oh, they took up their claim here last fall. They are pretty hard up. They have only one horse. Kiski hauled out all the lumber for his shack and barn with it. Thirty miles it is to Hilger. I was hauling wheat

then, and I used to pass him on the road walking beside the load and pushing when it was uphill."

Miss Smith smiled crookedly. One horse in a country where four- or six-horse teams were the rule was somewhat ludicrous. It was pathetic, too.

"Now, now! you needn't look that way! Kiski broke ten acres with that horse of his last spring. Got the ground in shape and got it seeded, too. The horse pulled, and the old man pushed, and, by golly, they got it in." There was respect, even admiration, in his voice.

"They have eight children, though," Mrs. Clark broke in. "The two oldest girls are doing housework in Lewistown."

Eight children. That meant three at home younger than the ones at school.

"Have they any cows?"

"One, but she's dry now. It's pretty hard for them."

Miss Smith decided not to urge the Kiskis again to eat in the schoolhouse.

The Kiskis in school were painfully shy. Rudolph, the oldest, going on eleven, hid his timidity under a sullen demeanor. Once in a while, however, he could be beguiled to join in a game of "Pum-Pum-Pull-Away" or horseshoe-pitching. He was a good pitcher. Margaret, next in age, expressed her shyness in wistfulness. Johnny, barely six, refused to speak. Never would he answer a question in class. Never a word did he utter to the children on the playground. He might, now and then, have made remarks to his sister and brother in Bohemian, but,

if so, he wasn't ever caught making them. Yet, he was by nature a happy child. When anything comical happened in school or something funny was said he would laugh out loud with an especially merry, infectious laugh. It was plain that he observed and understood more than his usual behavior indicated. The teacher, mindful of her psychology texts, tried vainly again and again to utilize these occasions of self-forgetfulness by surprising him into speech.

At the beginning of the term in September every child had come to school barefoot. As the season advanced the other pupils, family by family, donned their footwear, but the Kiskis continued to arrive barefoot, although it was now late in October and getting cold.

"Why don't you wear your shoes?" "Aren't your feet cold?" "Haven't you got any shoes?"

With their bare goose-fleshed feet Rudolph, Margaret, and Johnny picked their way between the prickly-pear cactus without answering. But it was plainly to be seen that more and more the continued questioning and the curious staring at their bare legs and feet embarrassed them.

Gradually the weather grew colder. The cracked gumbo froze to cement. Still the Kiskis came barefoot to school.

Then the first snow fell. It was but a thin film. Disks of cactus and tufts of bunch grass stuck through. Yet it was heavy enough to show plainly the tracks of the Kiski children's naked feet.

One day when John and Margaret had planned to reach school just as the bell rang, to escape the inevitable and dreaded comments of the others, they miscalculated the time. All the children were on the porch watching as the Kiskis walked, heads down, toward the school-house.

"I don't see how you can stand it!"

It was the irrepressible Teddy Kirk speaking. The others left their remarks unspoken, for this time Margaret answered, and there was defiance in her indistinct mumble.

"We like to go to school barefooted. We get there quicker that way."

She did not tell them that they had not come barefoot all the way; that at the hill nearest the schoolhouse they had stopped and undone the gunnysacks wrapped about their feet and legs and hidden them under a rock. When they went home, they would put them on again, for no one else went their way.

But little Johnny wasn't so good at keeping his mouth shut at home as he was at school. He didn't know better than to tell that none of them had worn the gunnysacks *all* the day. Fortunately or unfortunately for the children, a little Old World discipline was exercised upon them. The next day they wore the gunnysacks *all* the way to school. They wore them all day, too.

Their schoolmates and their teacher after a while grew used to seeing the coarse string-bound sacks, but the Kiskis never became used to wearing them. No longer



did Rudolph take part in the games. Margaret grew sullen and unapproachable like him. On pleasant days when the girls strolled by two's and three's with their arms about each other Margaret stood alone in a corner against the wall. Sometimes they invited her to come with them; but she never answered. All recess she would stand there just looking at the ground. At last the girls quit asking her. Margaret made believe that she did not notice either them or their neglect. No longer did Johnny's laughter ring out in unexpected places. All three were creeping farther and farther into their shells of silence. Finally Rudolph ran away. After two days his father located him in a barn, where he had been hiding in the hayloft. Unless he had milked the cows in that barn he had had nothing to eat during his absence. He was brought home and made to go back to school.

In November the threshers came to Kiski's place. Because the field there was so small, they made that threshing their last job before pulling out of the country. Mr. Kiski hauled the wheat to Hilger and bought shoes and stockings for the children who attended school.

Other school children, the smaller ones especially, always proudly displayed their new shoes at school the first day they wore them. Several times that fall the teacher had been asked to admire the pretty perforations on the toes, the shiny buttons, or the colored tassels on the strings. But the Kiskis were almost as painfully conscious of their new footwear as they had been of the gunnysacks. They arrived with faces darkly flushed, sat

down immediately, and pushed their feet far back under their seats. The teacher had hoped that to be shod like others would gradually restore their former morale. She was mistaken.

Kiski's cow had come fresh. The children had butter on their bread now. Miss Smith heard about it. She had occasion to pass by the children as they stood eating, and she saw that it was really true about the butter. Yet the Kiskis would not eat with the others. They continued to go out at noontime. If the weather was severely cold or stormy they ate in the hall, quickly. Then they would come in, without looking at anyone, and go to their seats.

As the four-month term drew to a close Miss Smith's heart ached for the Kiskis. They had not learned a great deal from their books; she had been unable to supply them with the many bare necessities they lacked; and their own keen realization of being different had made their attendance a torture. They were so unapproachable, too, that she had found little opportunity to show them her love and sympathy. She had had but one chance that she knew of to do so, and she was grateful for that one occasion, though it had not affected the Kiskis' silence nor changed in the least their subsequent conduct.

It came about in this way. Miss Smith had been late to school. There had been a heavy snowfall in the night, and she had not had previous experience in breaking trail. If she had not been new in the country she would have known that wading three miles through knee-deep snow takes considerable time. When at length she reached

the schoolhouse the Kiskis were there standing about the cold stove. All were crying — even Rudolph! They had been too miserably cold and numb to attempt building a fire for themselves. As soon as Miss Smith had the fire crackling merrily she took Johnny in her lap, undid the new shoes and stockings, and began to chafe the cold little feet. And when his crying still persisted she began telling "The Tarbaby." She had noticed early in the term that he particularly relished this tale. And sure enough, at the very first "Bim" of Brother Rabbit's paw on the tarbaby's cheek Johnny laughed through his tears right out loud — something he had not done for a month. Miss Smith decided to tell stories all day.

She felt justified in entertaining the Kiskis this way, for they were the only pupils who braved the roads that morning. She had a great fund of fairy tales and folk tales and a gift for telling them; also she had that day an audience whom professional entertainers might well have envied her. Johnny leaned against her knee. She put one arm about Margaret, who stood on one side, and would have put the other about Rudolph on the opposite side had she dared. He was a boy and eleven. With shining eyes and open mouths they drank in "Cinderella," "Hansel and Gretel," "Snow-White," "The Hag and the Bag," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Colter's Race for His Life," and "Mowgli."

Only to replenish the fire and melt snow for drinking-water did Miss Smith stop. Her audience was too timid and self-effacing to make any spoken requests, but after

each happy ending their eyes clamored, "More, more!"

At noon the water on the top of the stove was boiling. Miss Smith put condensed milk and a little sugar in it and brought the hot drink to the Kiskis in the hall. For out there they had gone as soon as she announced that it was dinnertime. They accepted with smiles and drank every drop, but without a word. Miss Smith, too, stayed in the hall to drink her tea with them. Then the story-telling went on again, until three o'clock in the afternoon, when the teacher bundled them up in some of her own wraps and sent them home.

Going back to her boarding-place, stepping carefully in the tracks she had made in the morning, Miss Smith reflected that should the county superintendent ever learn of her program for the day she would be in for a reprimand. In such a case, she thought, she would defend herself on the grounds that since formalized education had failed noticeably to benefit the Kiskis, it was not altogether unreasonable to try a little informality. Anyhow, she was fiercely glad that the Kiskis' school term would include one happy day.

It was with sorrow and regret that Miss Smith made her way to the schoolhouse on the last day of the session. With the other pupils she had accomplished something in the way of progress, but the Kiskis she would leave embittered, shy, and more isolated than she had found them.

She had just reached the shack and barely had time

to pile the kindling into the stove when she was aware of subdued noises in the hall. She thought absently that it was unusually early for the children to be arriving. When the door opened a crack to allow someone to peer in, she began to wonder what was going on. Then with a rush the three Kiskis were at the stove.

With her unmittened purple hands Margaret was thrusting something toward her. It was a small, square candy box of pristine whiteness. A wide pink silk ribbon ran obliquely across the top and was looped into a generous bow in the center.

"We brought you a present, Teacher," Margaret began breathlessly.

This time, however, Rudolph did not want his sister to be the chief spokesman. "There are fourteen pieces, Teacher. Two have something shiny around them. We looked."

And before Miss Smith had time to recover from this surprise a miracle came to pass. Johnny spoke, and he spoke in English!

"It is to eat, Teacher. It is candy."

Miss Smith said, "Thank you, children. It was very good of you to give me this."

She shook the stove grate vigorously. The ashes flew into her eyes. She had to wipe them.

"Open it, Teacher. Open it now."

The teacher took the box to her desk. The Kiskis followed and stood about her watching. There really were fourteen pieces. Johnny pointed out the two with tin-

foil. Each of the fourteen reposed daintily in a little cup of pleated paper. It was a wonderful box and Miss Smith was lavish with praises of it.

She held the opened box out to them. "Take one," she invited; and as they made no motion, "Please, do."

The three black heads shook vigorously. Johnny's hands flew behind him.

"They are for you, Teacher," they protested. "You eat."

But Miss Smith couldn't eat just then. More than anything else she wanted to see the Kiskis enjoy the contents of that box themselves. She felt small and unworthy to accept their astounding offering. But again, how could she refuse to accept it and kill cruelly their joy in giving? It was a gift not to be lightly disposed of. An inspiration came.

"Would you care if I shared it? There is enough so that every child in school can have a piece. Johnny could pass it around when they all get here. Would you like that?"

"Yes, yes, yes." Their black eyes shone.

Johnny carried the box to his seat and sat down with it. Rudolph and Margaret hovered about the teacher, happy, eager, excited. Rudolph explained how it all came about.

"Anna came home from Lewistown last night. Margaret and I wrote her a letter once and told her to buy us a present for you. We were afraid she'd forget, but she didn't."

Teddy Kirk was coming. Rudolph and Margaret saw him and ran out on the porch.

"We brought candy for Teacher. You are going to get some, too. Johnny has it. Come and see!"

Teddy was too taken aback to say anything. They led him in easily. The pieces were counted again.

Other children came. Rudolph and Margaret met each new arrival before he got to the door. To each in turn Johnny exhibited the box and its contents. He did not mind being the center of attraction now. He made use of his new-found speech, too.

"I am going to pass it around," he told them. "When the bell rings I am going to pass it."

Rudolph and Margaret talked. They chattered. The other children kept still. They had to get used to these new Kiskis.

When the bell rang, a few minutes before time, everybody was in his seat. Johnny got up and passed the candy. Teacher saw to it that he got one of the shiny pieces.

Candy — candy of any kind — was a rare treat to everybody. These chocolates were very fresh. They had soft creamy centers. Some had cherries in them. The children had not known that sweets like these existed.

They took their time about the licking and snibbling. Delights such as these had to be given their just dues. There was no needless or premature swallowing. And to think that the Kiskis had provided it! The Kiskis were assuming importance.

The Kiskis ate candy, too. They beamed on everybody. They had had something to give and everybody thought their gift wonderful.

The sun shone. At recess the girls again walked about by two's and three's. Margaret walked with them. Teddy presented Rudolph with one of his horseshoes, and Rudolph began to pitch it. Edward, the other first-grader, found a string in his overall pocket and promptly invited Johnny to be his horse. Johnny accepted.

He trotted; he paced; he neighed surprisingly like a horse. Then he kicked at the traces awhile.

"You should say 'Cut it out,'" he instructed his driver.

That noon the Kiskis ate lunch in the schoolhouse.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### What Do You Think?

1. Why do the Kiskis eat alone?
2. Why does Mr. Clark respect Mr. Kiski?
3. In what ways do the Kiskis show their independence?
4. How does Miss Smith win over the Kiskis and make them her friends?
5. Why does the gift of the box of candy make the Kiskis willing to be friendly to all their classmates?
6. Compare these homesteaders with the young homesteaders in the story called "Matches."
7. Compare the school the Kiskis attend with the one Emmy Lou attends in "The Right Promethean Fire" and the one Stephen attends in "Clodhopper."
8. In what ways do the Kiskis show the finest pioneer spirit? How are they like Stephen in "Clodhopper"?
9. Will the Kiskis succeed in life? Why, or why not?



*If You Want to Talk or Write**Based on the Story*

1. A conversation in which Margaret tells her mother what happened when she gave Miss Smith the candy
2. A conversation between Rudolph and his father in which Rudolph explains why he ran away  
(You might give these conversations in class as though they were short plays, or you might write them out and have the best ones read as plays.)

*Based on Your Own Experience*

1. A Strange Schoolmate of Mine
2. The Time I Felt Different from My Classmates
3. An Unusual School That I Once Attended
4. A Teacher Who Proved to Be a Good Friend to Me
5. A Lonely Boy (or Girl) I Once Knew

*If You Want to Read*

- "Man among Men," Katharine Patten  
"One Uses the Handkerchief," Elinore Cowan Stone  
"The Honorable Tommy" and "Young Lucretia," Mary E. Wilkins Freeman  
"Food for Thought," Anna Brand



## DEFENDING CHAMPION

by John R. Tunis

DO you play tennis yourself? Have you ever watched a tennis match between champions? Think what it must mean to be a champion — the long hours of practice, the nervous strain of playing before thousands of people, the fear that you will lose the championship to a newcomer — as some day you surely will. You have no members of a team, as in baseball or football, to share the responsibility of the game with you, but you play alone, or at most, in doubles, with a single partner. Suppose other values in life conflict with your desire to win a game? Think how difficult the decision must be.

See if you think the defending champion in this story solved the problem of good sportsmanship, not only in tennis, but in life outside the tennis court.

JOHN R. TUNIS has written many stories and articles on sports for practically every magazine in the United States. He is also the author of *Sports*, *Heroics and Hysterics*, *American Girl* (from which this story is taken), *Iron Duke*, and *Was College Worth While?* In all his work there is insistence on fair play, on placing the spirit of true sportsmanship above victory. Games, he thinks, were invented to be played for the joy of playing rather than for victory at all costs.

He was born in Boston in 1889. After preparing at the Stone School in Boston, he went to Harvard, where he graduated in 1911. During the World War he served in France. In 1920 he started writing on sports and for many years was one of the sports writers for the *New York Evening Post*, covering all the major tennis and golf matches in this country and in Europe.

His entrance into radio work was exciting, for in 1932 he reported the Davis Cup match in Paris between Allison and Borotra, in which, after an exciting final game that Allison thought for a moment he had won, Borotra won the game, set, and Davis Cup for France. This event was not only Mr. Tunis's first broadcast of a sports event, but it was also the first time a sports event was broadcast from Europe to the United States.

## DEFENDING CHAMPION

THERE comes a time in the course of human events when the champion suddenly feels herself losing grip on things, when even the salt of competition begins to lose its flavor. It comes in the life of all great champions; but Florence did not know this and indeed would have been little consoled by it if she had. Things were not going properly.

The fact was that where once Florence had been a talented and charming little girl, a possibility for the future, an unknown quantity, she was now exactly the opposite. She was the champion, by no means devoid of charm and grace but devoid of uncertainty; she was winning as she had won for several years with a regularity somewhat monotonous to the observers in the stands. What more natural, then, that she should find the galleries begin to be slightly apathetic to her best shots, that they should begin to applaud not her victories but the winning strokes of some young girl whom she was erasing from the court with ease and finality. Meeting this feeling for the first time she was annoyed and upset. She was to meet it oftener as time went on.

So she girded herself for the fray that day and went out to battle with something less than her customary eagerness. As she passed through the tent just before her first match that afternoon, she saw a telegram lying on the referee's table addressed to her. The referee was not

there; but his assistant, a thin young man, was, and as her eye fell upon the telegram he handed it over. She took the envelope and, turning aside, opened it and read the message. Then, stuffing it into the pocket of her white cardigan, she leaned over into an adjoining box where her mother chanced to be sitting.

"Mother. Mother dearest." Then in a lower and more discreet tone, "Get Dave on the telephone and ask him to come down immediately. At once."

"Dave Moore? What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Get Dave, get him now, at once." And she took up her armful of rackets and moved toward the steps, ready to take the court for her match. That was one of the nice things about the champion. No matter how unimportant her opponent she never kept anyone waiting a single second. Others might put on airs, others would turn up twenty minutes late for their matches; not Florence Farley. Hence was she beloved by all referees.

The referee of the championships had returned and was at the moment standing behind his desk in the rear of the marquee. He was a short, stocky man in white flannels and a dark-blue double-breasted coat. There was a trace of irritation in his voice as he addressed his satellite, the thin young man who stood nervously at his side.

"Where's that telegram that was here? You didn't give that telegram to Miss Farley, did you?"

His subordinate, with a timid air of not being quite sure of himself, replied evasively;

"I — you see — I didn't give it to her; but she came along —"

The elder man's face deepened into an annoyed frown.

"Can't I leave this place for two minutes without something going wrong? First that ball trouble and now this telegram. Do I have to leave instructions in writing, to tell you what to do for everything that comes up? I should think your common sense would tell you that you shouldn't hand a player, any player at all, a telegram just before taking the court. Yes, I know, it may be just a telegram of good luck, and then it may be full of bad news and upset them so they can't —"

"I tell you I didn't give it to her, Mr. Dennison. I didn't give it to her. She came along and asked for you, and I said that you were in the clubhouse talking to the head groundsman and that you'd be right back. Then she saw the telegram and asked was it for her. What could I say?"

The referee shook his head. "You ought to have known better, you ought to have known better," he mumbled.

Meanwhile Florence was taking the court with little Grace Dekay from the West. The match was not a pleasant one; she started badly, as who would not after that disagreeable telegram? And because she started badly and made a few errors the stupid crowds in the stands at once presumed the little girl was forcing her into errors. And they applauded the errors of the champion with vigor, lese majesty, this, to which the champion

was unaccustomed. It was, she realized, the passage of time. Once she had been the favorite, the unknown comer, the player of the future. Now she was the champion, the holder, no longer interesting, no longer sensational. No longer the favorite, the darling of the crowds. Dimly she appreciated all this; but try as she would to control herself, she was annoyed. She lost three games before she could settle down to business and blast the little red-cheeked infant from the court. Worse, she felt herself losing the sympathy of the crowds, that there were in the stands many who actually hoped to see her beaten. A new and most uncomfortable feeling.

An hour later in anything but the best of humors she was walking in toward the clubhouse with her armful of rackets to meet Dave rushing out to the courts. It was an excessively hot afternoon; she was perspiring from the exercise and the sun, and it was plain that Dave had been exercising also in his unwonted hurry to reach her presence.

"'Lo, Floss." His pet expression for her, used only by Dave in moments of emotion. "What's up? I'm dead." His hat was in his hand, his face, now chubby, was bathed in moisture, quite as moist as Florence's.

"I'll tell you what's up in just two words. Walk back with me. Remember my Aunt Susie up in Millville?"

"Yeah. I think I remember your mother mentioning her to me."

"She's my only relative. Except my father and mother. She's sick. Ill. Very ill. Had an operation



this morning for cancer; they don't know whether or not she'll live."

Dave whistled. "Phew. That's bad. Coming this week of the championships, that makes it tough for you, Floss."

Florence had to smile. Loyal Dave. He always saw things from her point of view; he perceived the catastrophe to Aunt Susie solely as it affected her health, her mental and physical equilibrium during her hours of trial.

"Now look here." They were approaching the clubhouse, where her mother was waiting for her, and she desired to have things planned before that lady had to be faced. "Now Dave, step quick. And fast. How much money you got on you?"

"About eighty dollars."

"Eighty! That's no more use than a sick headache. I'll give you my check for three hundred. You beat it to Roosevelt Field in a taxi right away. Right away, d'you understand?"

"Roosevelt Field?" Dave was confused by this command.

"Roosevelt Field. Don't gape. Do what I tell you. Get to Roosevelt by taxi as soon as you can and find out the first plane that leaves tonight stopping at Fairfield —"

"But wait a minute, Floss, you aren't going up there by plane? And back tomorrow before your next match? Why, it will kill you, you won't get any sleep, it will ruin your game, it will absolutely kill your chances —"

"Listen, Dave, please don't argue. I'll have a sweet scene with mother as it is. I'm going to Aunt Susie. Tonight. Get that plainly in your mind."

He was stopped. Humbly, "Yes, Florence." His admiration for the girl he had loved for five years suddenly magnified in less than five seconds as he watched her toss the thing she cared most about in her life, her title, into the balance. Here was a side of her nature he had long suspected, but which had never before been revealed.

"At Fairfield we can get a taxi to Millville. Find out exactly when the plane leaves and when it arrives. Wire Fairfield for a taxi to meet us at the flying-field. I've had nothing to eat since breakfast; so I'll stay here and eat as soon as I've washed and dressed. You better telephone me here at the club; is that all clear?"

It was. Dave was off. But it was more than an hour before he telephoned, and his voice when she answered had a disappointing sound.

"Say, Florence, this isn't so good. The last plane left for Fairfield before I got here, and there isn't any other until eight tomorrow morning."

"Why, that's easy. All you have to do is hire one."

"Hire one?"

"Yes, Dave, hire one."

"You mean charter a special plane to go up there tonight?"

"I do."

Even though accustomed to taking orders, and extraordinary orders too, from Florence, this dazed him for a

second. "Hold on a minute." He turned to someone evidently at his side in the office. "Well, Florence, the manager here says they won't charter a special plane unless you agree to take it up and back. He says that they don't like to hit Fairfield at night anyway because the field there isn't properly equipped for night landing —"

"Never mind that. I'll take it. Tell him I have to have the plane."

"Wait a sec . . . what's that? . . . Oh . . . Florence, he says it will be four-fifty. That check you gave me was for three hundred. Shall I give him mine for one-fifty? Do you want to go that bad?"

Florence was tired. She grew irritated. "Yes, of course. Fix it up, Dave, I leave it to you. I'm going to grab a taxi here, and I ought to be there within an hour. Have the plane ready, and be sure and be ready yourself." She rang off and went into the dressing room where she kept a small handbag packed and ready for an emergency. This was one emergency that the Champion of the World had never contemplated.

Soon afterward she was seated beside Dave while the plane rose swiftly into the dusk above the flat Long Island countryside. What queer impulse had compelled her to rush to the aid of this stricken old woman? This her mother had demanded to know in excited and querulous tones; so changed had her attitude become that risking a championship was to Milly Farley now a matter of the gravest import. With questioning eyes Dave also demanded the answer to their dash into the blackness of

space; he too saw her title and her future jeopardized, her reputation at stake by this midnight journey across three states. The answer? What was the answer? This: that despite her childish hatred of her aunt, Aunt Susie the persecutor, Aunt Susie the tormentor from those earliest days of "The Rose and the Ring" in Millville, despite the undeniable fact that Aunt Susie had never shown pride in her achievements, had always in her letters and comments expressed disapproval of Florence's "gallivanting" about the world, despite all these things, there was within the girl something that made her hurry to the side of the prostrated woman. Not alone because she was now as she had been for years the man, the wage-earner of the family. That perhaps, but also the sudden realization as she read the telegram that she had neglected Aunt Susie. She herself had once lived in Millville, she had sprung from that little town upon the Common; she knew, she understood, she appreciated Aunt Susie's outlook on life. Whereas Aunt Susie, who had never been out of Millville, was totally incapable of appreciating hers. The thought that she was possibly losing the championship, that she was throwing away the title and with the title an income of many thousands of dollars a year, did not occur to her, or if it did occur to her she did not think about it. Something deep, far deep within, called her to the withered old spinster on the hill at Millville; some hidden chord was touched, and she had perforce to respond. It was, she reflected with some slight bitterness, the first thing she had done for many years, the first free,

spontaneous thing she had done for a long, long time, which did not assist her toward the goal of her life, the winning of the championships.

And as the machine droned on into the night, the picture suddenly came to her of the last time she had seen Aunt Susie, of that gaunt weather-beaten woman standing forlornly alone upon the top step of the porch of the little faded house upon the Common. It was an unpleasant picture; it brought unpleasant thoughts in its train; she realized with distaste that never once had she made any attempt to bring this stern woman into sympathy with her life; seldom had she written her, thought of her, bothered about her. Even a postcard now and then, a word from Paris or London or Berlin would — but no, she had been too busy. And now Aunt Susie was finished, through, lying in pain in the Millville Hospital. Or perhaps out of it forever.

She fingered the telegram in the pocket of her coat. The simple eloquence of that message had been terrifying; the fact that it did not exceed ten words spoke so emphatically, so pathetically, of Aunt Susie's character. Alone in her direst hour of need, she had been unable to forget that one paid extra for every word over ten in a telegram.

An hour, two hours, three hours passed as the machine drove on through the darkness. Unpleasant hours they were for Florence Farley, who spent them in a most disagreeable contemplation of her manifold sins and ignorances. Finally, they bumped to a landing, not a good

landing, but they were lucky to have any kind of landing, because it had begun to drizzle and the pilot knew Fairfield only slightly. They sloshed through mud to their waiting taxi and in a few minutes were off on the mountainous road to Millville.

The hospital was new since the days of her childhood. The old, two-story, brown frame building on Elm Street which had been added to year by year had been sold; a tremendous drive financed and undertaken by a New York corporation had raised money for a magnificent brick affair upon the road to the Common. There it stood, gaunt and bare and unsightly in the middle of a field opposite the Brewster place. Yet notwithstanding the hour the building was not dark as they drove up; there were several lighted rooms on the ground floor and a significantly gleaming chamber on the second story.

The matron was waiting in a reception room off the hall; behind her as she appeared at the sound of their motor was a white-capped nurse in attendance, much as the colonel of a regiment must, of necessity, have a subordinate officer at his beck and call. She greeted Florence and Dave while the young nurse stared at Florence with open eyes as that lady was drawn into the clean new reception room to the side, a cubbyhole which had the dismal and impersonal air of all hospital waiting rooms with old novels and ancient magazines on a small table vainly attempting to convey a homelike atmosphere.

"She's holding her own," said the matron. "That is

about all we can say definitely at this time. The doctor is up there now."

"Did you get my wire?"

"Yes, Miss Farley. We were able to move her into a private room as you suggested. About the specialist — ah, here's Dr. Faulkner now. This is Miss Florence Farley, Doctor."

How Florence hated the sound of that voice rasping out her full name. Florence Farley. Anyone else would have been Miss Farley; she was Florence Farley for life. She greeted the little bespectacled man who entered the room. He was a new practitioner since her time, for Dr. Barton had long since passed away, and this youngish fellow with the sparse blond hair had succeeded to his practice. She saw immediately the curious so-this-is-Florence-Farley-look come into his eyes as he shook hands. His fingers were strong and competent; she liked him instantly, had confidence in him; but still she hoped he had called in that specialist.

"Your aunt is — well — just now she's no worse than she was this afternoon. That is all I can say, Miss Farley." He took his glasses off and polished them nervously. "I wanted — I was most anxious tonight to call in Dr. Foster —"

"The specialist? But why didn't you?" She turned upon the matron. "I wired you particularly to spare no expense, didn't I?"

"Yes, Miss Farley, you see Dr. Foster lives in Fairfield,

and he charges twenty-five dollars for a consultation of this sort, and then of course there would be a taxi for him up and back because the train service is so uncertain now — I didn't know — I wasn't quite sure — ”

Florence addressed the doctor. “ Can you get him by telephone? This minute. Yes, this minute. Do so, please. Have him come immediately by taxi and tell him I am perfectly willing to pay him a hundred dollars for coming at this hour of the night.” She went into the hall with the doctor to find Dave sitting on a hard wooden bench, nodding. The adjutant of the matron became suddenly efficient at the telephone switchboard.

“ Fairfield 2893. This is Millville, 8400. Yes, please.”

“ Dave.” He looked up drowsily. “ Dave. Get the bags out of the car; tell that chauffeur we won't want him until, let's see, until ten tomorrow.” She glanced at the clock on the wall. “ Ten this morning. Then we'll get you fixed up with a room, and you better go to bed. I must sit up until the specialist comes from Fairfield and consults with this doctor here.”

It was, Florence discovered, one thing to be on time for a match when you could arrive at the clubhouse an hour beforehand, dress leisurely, and saunter out to the court whenever you wished. And it was quite another matter to taxi over country roads, climb half-dead with fatigue into a plane, and bump through the air to a flying-field where you were still a generous ride by car from your rackets and your clothes. But somehow she made it.



And somehow came off the court the next afternoon a victorious if thoroughly exhausted young lady.

While she was staggering to the clubhouse with her mind upon only one thing, that voluptuous heaven which was a bath filled with hot water, the crowd was trooping from the stands saying that the match showed exactly what the match against the little girl from the West the day before had proved. The handwriting on the wall. Let's see now . . . how old was that Farley girl? And they immediately began to discuss possible candidates for her crown.

She had almost reached the clubhouse when she heard feet padding upon the turf behind.

"Miss Farley. Oh, Miss Farley." She turned around to see Jim Robinson of the *Mail* chasing breathlessly after her.

"Excuse me, Miss Farley, but do you mind saying whether you were the one who hired that plane to go up-country last night at Roosevelt Field?"

Florence frowned, hesitated. This was something that she wished on no account to be made public. It was something which was close to her, which was hers; it was not anything that concerned the champion, nor had it any bearing upon the side which she turned to the public. So she shook her head.

"Why, no. Some other Farley, not I."

His face clouded. They stood looking at each other, he anxious to believe her but unable to do so. "Is that right, Miss Farley? Reason I ask is the A.P. man at the

field saw you come in this morning before your match, and he recognized you and checked up on it. The paper wants to know for sure; they just telephoned me to find out before they run anything about it. You see you being champion, it makes a difference."

The champion. Florence was in despair, she felt herself trapped, enmeshed; she felt unable to move, to stir, to turn, to perform the slightest and most inconsequential act without starting the wheels going. The truth was that her childhood, her life upon the Common, was something very dear to her; it represented a tranquillity and happiness very different from the struggle and anxieties of her later life in the Heights. All this Aunt Susie typified; she was the symbol of life upon the Common and those far forgotten days when Gordon pedaling up had to fight for his life with the boys on the Hill. This part of her existence she cherished; it was real; from that soil and from those people about the homely little community on that rocky hilltop she had sprung; that, she felt in her heart, was and always would be home. It was something she did not wish to talk about or have talked about; it hurt to have Aunt Susie a subject for discussion in print, to have her in any way interjected into the feverish turmoil of the battle as she lay dying in the hospital in Millville. For a long moment Florence remained speechless, seeing exactly how the gates had closed the walls about her life, unable to effect any release. The quiet between them lasted while the little

man stood beside her, waiting, watching, observing that she was a tired girl.

At long last she nodded. "Yes, Jimmy. It was I. I had — I have a sick aunt upcountry, an old lady who's very near and dear to me. She had an operation, isn't expected to live. I had to run up and look after things."

His admiration was so natural and so unaffected it did her good. The only pleasant thing she had seen or felt for days, that look and that tone in his voice, so genuine was it that it revived her spirits momentarily.

"Why, Miss Farley! And you playing the championships this week? Say . . . I guess there isn't many of those dames would risk a title like that. No sir. Look here, you won't be going up again, will you?"

"I don't know. Not tonight. I must rest because there's a hard match tomorrow. Then, well, it depends on my aunt. If she's in danger still I may have to go."

"What? The night before the finals? And come down like that just before playing the finals? Mean to say you'd go up and take chances of losing Saturday afternoon?"

This in a tone as if to say, Why, not even the great Florence Farley could hope to do that and win. The great Florence Farley to herself admitted the truth behind that tone. She could not live through another night of strain and win the championship. And yet —

"I don't know. If she — if my aunt wasn't — if she needed me I'd probably have to go. But look here, you'll

keep all this out of the papers, won't you, Jim? I mean I'd consider it a great personal favor if you would. Somehow I don't want to drag the family into it that way."

He was a trifle dazed, a trifle disturbed by the emotion and the deepness of the champion's feelings. Hadn't he always said she was good stuff, that Farley kid? Hadn't he always told them she was o.k.? But to see her reach the final round and then deliberately toss the title away — this was too much. He hardly knew what he was saying.

"I unnerstan', Miss Farley, I unnerstan' how you feel about it. Yep, I'll tell the boss how things are; sure, he's a great guy. He'll shut down on it. Don't you worry. And say, I wish you the best of luck for Saturday, anyway."

"Thank you, Jim," said the champion. "I'm afraid I may need it." He stood watching her as she went up the steps. He was afraid she would, also.

As good as his word, the *Mail* the next morning said nothing about the handicap under which the champion was playing. The trouble was that two other dailies with less fine sensibilities gathered enough from rumor and enough from fact to report that Miss Florence Farley, the champion, had made a midnight dash across country by airplane to the bedside of a dying relative, and that her further appearance in the tournament was a matter of doubt. "At a late hour last night Miss Farley could not be reached in her hotel . . ."

Most of the crowd had heard of it by the time she took

the court the following afternoon, and she was greeted by an outburst of sudden applause, a reception contrasting amazingly with the polite and perfunctory manner in which she had been received a day or so previously. But that applause was as nothing to the way she was greeted as she took the court in the final round against the one dangerous player in the country, following an exhausting trip to Millville in which the doctor had confessed her aunt's death to be only a question of hours away. She who never found it necessary to be five seconds late for a match was nearly a half-hour behind time that afternoon, while the referee waited impatiently, telephoning every three minutes to the clubhouse to learn whether she had at last arrived, and while her opponent, anxious and uneasy, twisted about in her seat in a state of nervous anxiety. In the stand, however, the crowd was silent and patient. They were reading of the latest dash of the champion to see her dying aunt, and as they read they shook their heads, asking each other if she was not wonderful, and wouldn't it be splendid if she could win — ah, there she is now.

Tired, wan, haggard, she walked down the brick steps to the court, a different woman from the eager, smiling Florence Farley who usually faced the battalion of cameras as she tripped into the arena for the great event. But as she came down there was a ripple of applause, growing louder and louder until the noise alarmed her, she who was so accustomed to noise. It caused her to look up, to glance upward into those smiling faces; until

then she had not realized that it was for her. Until she saw their open mouths and heard encouraging words flung down in the din she did not believe it was hers. A smile came upon her lips; her heart jumped with delight at that thundering outburst of affection, at that greeting from the kindly thousands above. Who indeed could withstand, who could hear unmoved, that infectious, spontaneous roar, that greeting from friend to friend? She forgot the weary days behind, forgot she was jaded, spent; with zest and eagerness she knocked the ball about the court, with a zest she had not felt for many a long day.

The crowd noticed it immediately. When she won the toss and stepped to the service line the applause surged forth again, so loud, so insistent that she could not in justice to her opponent begin. In vain the umpire in his high chair turned half-around toward the stands with upraised hand. No one heeded him, nor heeded Florence nervously bouncing the ball at her feet, waiting for the uproar to subside. Across the net stood her adversary, grimly nervous and upset by the incident, thinking to herself that if the champion had lost the gallery, as someone had explained before the match, she was getting it back rather quickly. This, she knew, and it failed to steady her nerves, would make all the difference in the champion's game. It did. With all her old-time vigor, with all that marvelous sense of timing which she alone possessed, Florence leaned into a fore-hand drive while the crowd watched the other player, caught on the wrong foot, miss the ball by yards. The

noise interrupted them again. "Ah . . . who said Florence Farley was slipping? Some shot, that?" The commotion stimulated her as nothing else in the world could have done; she threw off her fatigue as she tossed aside her thin yellow sweater when they changed courts; cleverly and accurately she applied pressure when pressure was necessary, used subtlety when subtlety alone would win. And at every shot and every rally the entranced and delighted onlookers saw further proof of the stanch heart and stout nerve of the girl "who could and would risk her title by running across three states to the sickbed of her mother . . . aunt, was it? Anyhow, look at that for a backhand, what a shot, what a player that girl is . . ."

"That most popular of all American champions, Miss Florence Farley of Greenwood Heights, New York, won her fifth national singles title in succession yesterday afternoon to the delight of ten thousand frenzied spectators —"

So the newspapers said the next morning. The newspapers were right, too.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. At the beginning of the story, what is the attitude of the spectators toward the champion? What is the reason for their attitude?
2. What do Florence, her mother, and Dave think of the telegram?

3. In what ways does Florence show that she is a modern businesswoman?
4. What does she do for her aunt when she arrives at the hospital?
5. What details show the contrast between her life and her aunt's?
6. Why does she try to keep the news of her journey and of her aunt's sickness from the papers?
7. How does the news of her journey affect the watching crowd?
8. How does the spirit of the crowd affect her playing?
9. What else is fine about Florence Farley besides her skill at tennis?
10. How does an important position like that of a sports champion, a famous actress, a member of a royal family, affect a person's private life? Give some example from stories you may have read in the newspapers.

*If You Want to Write*

1. Florence Farley's Final Match, as written up by Jim Robinson in the sports column of the *Mail*
2. A letter written by Florence's mother to an old friend telling of what Florence did the day of the final match
3. The Time My Friend Proved to Be a Good Sport
4. An Unexpected Victory for Our Team

*If You Want to Read*

"Champions All," Richard Connell  
"The Phantom Drive," William T. Tilden, 2nd  
"Please Go to the Net," Lawrence Perry  
*American Girl*, John R. Tunis  
*The Sporting Gesture*, Thomas L. Stix



## A DAY'S WAIT

by Ernest Hemingway

CHILDREN sometimes get strange ideas from what they hear, or overhear, grown-ups say. Older people, through their thoughtlessness or lack of understanding, often cause children unnecessary suffering. As you read "A Day's Wait," notice how short the story is, how very little is said; and yet see if you do not get a vivid idea of just how the sick boy felt and also of how the father must have felt when he realized what his nine-year-old son had been thinking all day long.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY is another author who has had an exciting life. He was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1898. As a boy he accompanied his father, a physician, on his visits; he has told of these experiences in some of his short stories. Most of his boyhood was spent in Michigan, where he was educated in the public schools and was popular as a football-player and a boxer. After graduation, for a few months he was a reporter on the *Kansas City Star*.

Before the United States entered the World War, he went to France as a volunteer of the American ambulance unit. Later he served on the Italian front, where he was seriously wounded and received two of the highest medals awarded by the Italian Government. After the war was over, he returned to America and entered newspaper work. He then became the European correspondent for the *Toronto Star* and reported battles in the Near East and the Greek Revolution. Later he became Paris correspondent for a newspaper syndicate and made many friends in France.

He is fond of sports — tennis, skiing, shooting, fishing, and long bicycle tours. He also likes to go to bullfights. He has lived in various parts of this country — for a while in Key West, Florida, and in Wyoming. He does not like New York or New York literary circles.

He is one of our most popular writers and has many imitators of his style, with its combination of being at the same time hard-boiled and tenderhearted.

## A DAY'S WAIT

HE came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed, and I saw he looked ill. He was shivering, his face was white, and he walked slowly as though it ached to move.

"What's the matter, Schatz?"

"I've got a headache."

"You'd better go back to bed."

"No. I'm all right."

"You go to bed. I'll see you when I'm dressed."

But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and miserable boy of nine years. When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a fever.

"You go up to bed," I said, "you're sick."

"I'm all right," he said.

When the doctor came he took the boy's temperature.

"What is it?" I asked him.

"One hundred and two."

Downstairs, the doctor left three different medicines in different colored capsules with instructions for giving them. One was to bring down the fever, another a purgative, the third to overcome an acid condition. The germs of influenza can only exist in acid condition, he explained. He seemed to know all about influenza and said there was nothing to worry about if the fever did not go above one

hundred and four degrees. This was a light epidemic of flu, and there was no danger if you avoided pneumonia.

Back in the room I wrote the boy's temperature down and made note of the time to give the various capsules.

"Do you want me to read to you?"

"All right. If you want to," said the boy. His face was very white, and there were dark areas under his eyes. He lay still in the bed and seemed very detached from what was going on.

I read aloud from Howard Pyle's *Book of Pirates*; but I could see he was not following what I was reading.

"How do you feel, Schatz?" I asked him.

"Just the same, so far," he said.

I sat at the foot of the bed and read to myself while I waited for it to be time to give another capsule. It would have been natural for him to go to sleep, but when I looked up he was looking at the foot of the bed, looking very strangely.

"Why don't you try to go to sleep? I'll wake you up for the medicine."

"I'd rather stay awake."

After a while he said to me, "You don't have to stay in here with me, Papa, if it bothers you."

"It doesn't bother me."

"No, I mean you don't have to stay if it's going to bother you."

I thought perhaps he was a little lightheaded, and after giving him the prescribed capsules at eleven o'clock I went out for a while. It was a bright, cold day, the

ground covered with a sleet that had frozen so that it seemed as if all the bare trees, the bushes, the cut brush, and all the grass and the bare ground had been varnished with ice. I took the young Irish setter for a little walk up the road and along a frozen creek, but it was difficult to stand or walk on the glassy surface, and the dog slipped and slithered, and I fell twice, hard, once dropping my gun and having it slide away over the ice.

We flushed a covey of quail under a high clay bank with overhanging brush, and I killed two as they went out of sight over the top of the bank. Some of the covey lit in trees, but most of them scattered into brush piles, and it was necessary to jump on the ice-coated mounds of brush several times before they would flush. Coming out while you were poised unsteadily on the icy, springy brush they made difficult shooting, and I killed two, missed five, and started back pleased to have found a covey close to the house and happy there were so many left to find on another day.

At the house they said the boy had refused to let anyone come into the room.

"You can't come in," he said. "You mustn't get what I have."

I went up to him and found him in exactly the position I had left him, white-faced, but with the tops of his cheeks flushed by the fever, staring still, as he had stared, at the foot of the bed.

I took his temperature.

"What is it?"

"Something like a hundred," I said. It was one hundred and two and four-tenths.

"It was a hundred and two," he said.

"Who said so?"

"The doctor."

"Your temperature is all right," I said. "It's nothing to worry about."

"I don't worry," he said, "but I can't keep from thinking."

"Don't think," I said. "Just take it easy."

"I'm taking it easy," he said and looked straight ahead. He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something.

"Take this with water."

"Do you think it will do any good?"

"Of course it will."

I sat down and opened the *Pirate* book and commenced to read, but I could see he was not following; so I stopped.

"About what time do you think I'm going to die?" he asked.

"What?"

"About how long will it be before I die?"

"You aren't going to die. What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, yes, I am. I heard him say a hundred and two."

"People don't die with a fever of one hundred and two. That's a silly way to talk."

"I know they do. At school in France the boys told

me you can't live with forty-four degrees. I've got a hundred and two."

He had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o'clock in the morning.

"You poor Schatz," I said. "Poor old Schatz. It's like miles and kilometers. You aren't going to die. That's a different thermometer. On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind it's ninety-eight."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely," I said. "It's like miles and kilometers. You know, like how many kilometers we make when we do seventy miles in the car?"

"Oh," he said.

But his gaze at the foot of the bed relaxed slowly. The hold over himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very slack, and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. What is really the matter with Schatz?
2. What does he think is the matter with him? Why?
3. How would you describe the father's attitude toward his son?
4. How does it compare with the way your mother and father treat you when you are sick?
5. Is the father in any way to blame for his son's suffering?
6. What shows the father's real feeling toward his son?
7. What kind of boy is Schatz?
8. We are told that in contrast to his behavior on the first

day of his illness, Schatz on the second day "cried very easily at little things that were of no importance." Why does he cry?

*If You Want to Write*

1. The Time I Was Really Sick When I Was Little
2. Taking Care of My Younger Brother (or Sister)
3. The Loss of My First Tooth
4. My Mother as a Nurse

*If You Want to Read*

- "Not Wanted," Jesse Lynch Williams  
"Shame," Stephen Crane  
"Home Is the Sailor," Bill Adams  
"A Little Brother of the Books," Josephine Dodge Daskam  
Bacon  
"Minding the Calves," David R. DeJong  
"A Little Girl from Town," Ruth Suckow  
*Dream Days* and *The Wind in the Willows*, Kenneth  
Grahame  
"David's Star of Bethlehem," Christine Whiting Par-  
menter  
"Little-Girl-Afraid-of-a-Dog," Mary E. Wilkins Freeman



## THE COWARD

by Albert Payson Terhune

PEOPLE who live on farms need well-trained dogs to herd their cattle and sheep. Such dogs must have both intelligence and courage as well as careful training if they are to perform their tasks skillfully. But duties of this sort do not prevent a dog from being a companion and protector for the children of the household. In "The Coward" you will read of a dog who found his training in his double duty of sheepherder and child-protector beset with unusual difficulty and danger.

PROBABLY no writer of stories about dogs knows his subject better than Albert Payson Terhune, for he breeds collies at his home, Sunnybank, in New Jersey; and his thoroughbred dogs and his stories about them are well known throughout the country.

He was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1872. After a happy outdoor boyhood, he went to Columbia University. Then he traveled in Europe and in Egypt, crossed the Syrian wilderness on horseback, and lived for a while with an outlaw tribe of Bedouins.

When he returned to this country, he took up newspaper work. He was on the staff of the *New York Evening World* from 1894 to 1916. He did not like newspaper work at all. He wrote rather melodramatic serial stories in his free time and thus earned enough money to gain possession of Sunnybank, his childhood home.

He had long wanted to write stories about dogs, but publishers would have none of them. Then in 1914 he finally had a story printed about one of his collies. From then on, his dog stories have increased in popularity. He says that all of them are basically true, because he has never had the dogs in his stories do anything that he has not known an actual dog to do.

## THE COWARD

IT began when Laund was a rangily gawky six-month puppy and when Danny Crae was only seven years old. Danny had claimed the spraddling little fluffball of a collie as his own, on the day the boy's father lifted the two-month-old puppy out of the yard where Laund lived and played and slept and had a wonderful time with his several brothers and sisters.

On that morning Ronald Crae ordained that the brown-and-white baby collie was to become a herder of sheep and a guard of the house and farm. On that morning, seven-year-old Danny announced that Laund was to be his very own dog and help him herd his adored bantams.

Now, Ronald Crae was not given to knuckling under to anyone. But he had a strangely gentle way with him as concerned this crippled son of his. Therefore, instead of the sharp rebuke Danny had a right to expect for putting his own wishes against his sire's, Ronald petted the wan little face and told Danny jokingly that they would share Laund in partnership. Part of the time the puppy should herd the Crae sheep and do other farm work. Part of the time he should be Danny's playfellow. And so it was arranged.

A year earlier, a fearsome pestilence had scourged America, sending black horror to the hearts of ten million mothers throughout the land and claiming thousands of

little children as its victims. Danny Crae had but been brushed lightly by the hem of the pestilence's robe. He did not die, as did so many children in his own township. But he rose from a three-month illness with useless legs that would not move or bear a fraction of his frail weight.

Quickly he learned to make his way around, after a fashion, by means of double crutches. But every doctor declared he must be a hopeless and half-helpless cripple for life.

Small wonder his usually dominant father did not veto any plan of his stricken child's! Small wonder he skimped the hours of herd-training for Laund, in order to leave the puppy free to be the playmate of the sick boy!

In spite of this handicap, young Laund picked up the rudiments and then the finer points of his herding work with an almost bewildering swiftness and accuracy. Ronald Crae was an excellent trainer, to be sure, firm and self-controlled and commonsensible, if a trifle stern with his dogs, and a born dogman. But the bulk of the credit went to the puppy himself. He was one of those not wholly rare collies that pick up their work as though they had known it all before and were remembering rather than learning.

Crae was proud of the little dog. Presently he began to plan entering him sometime in the yearly field trials of the National Collie Association, confident that Laund

would be nearer the front than the rear of that stiff competition.

Then, when the puppy was six months old, Crae changed his opinion of the promising youngster — changed it sharply and disgustedly. It happened in this wise:

Of old, Danny had rejoiced to go afield with his father and to watch the rounding up and driving and folding and penning of the farm's sheep. Now that he was able to move only a little way and on slow crutches, the child transferred his attention to a flock of pedigreed bantams which his father had bought him and which were the boy's chief delight.

Like Ronald, he had a way with dumb things. The tame bantams let him handle them at will. They ate from his wizened fingers and lighted on his meagerly narrow and uneven shoulders for food. Then it occurred to him to teach Laund to herd and drive them. Luckily for his plan and for the safety and continued tameness of the little flock of chickens, Laund was as gentle with them as with the youngest of his master's lambs. Gravely and tenderly he would herd them, at Danny's shrill order, avoiding stepping on any of them or frightening them.

It was a pretty sight. Watching it and Danny's delight in the simple maneuvers, Ronald forgot his own annoyance in having to share a valuable puppy's valuable training-time with his son.

One day Danny and Laund sat side by side on a rock,

back of the barnyard, watching the bantams scramble for handfuls of thrown feed. Among the flock was a tiny mother hen with a half-dozen downily diminutive chicks. Anxiously she clucked to them as she grabbed morsel after morsel of the feast and tried to shove the other bantams aside to give place to her babies where the feed was thickest.

As the last of the flung grain was gobbled, the flock dispersed. Most of them drifted to the barnyard. The mother hen and her chicks strayed out toward the truck garden, some fifty feet in front of where the boy and the dog were sitting.

Of a sudden the tiny mother crouched, with a raucously crooning cry to her children, spreading her wings for them to hide under. As they ran to her, a dark shadow swept the sunlit earth. Down from nowhere a huge hen hawk shot, like a brown feathery cannon ball, diving at the baby bantams and at their frightened dam.

"Laund!" squealed Danny, pointing to the chicks.

The six-month puppy leaped to them. He had no idea why he was sent thither or what he was supposed to do. He did not see the swooping hawk. Never had he even seen a hawk before, though hawks were plentiful enough in that mountain region. But he noted the flustered excitement of the hen and the scurrying of the golden mites toward her and the alarm in Danny's loved voice. Wherefore he bounded alertly into the arena — to do he knew not what.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing for him to do.

As he reached the hen, something dark and terrible clove its way downward, so close to him that the air of it fanned his ruff.

A chick was seized, and the hawk beat its way upward.

Instinctively, Laund sprang at the bird before its mighty pinions could lift it clear of the earth. He leaped upon it right valorously and dug his half-developed teeth into its shoulder.

Then, all the skies seemed to be falling and smiting Laund as they fell.

A handful of feathers came away in his mouth, as the hawk dropped the mangled chick and wheeled about on the half-grown puppy that had pinched its shoulder.

The drivingly powerful wings lambasted him with fearful force and precision, knocking him off his feet, beating the breath out of him, half-blinding him. The hooked beak rove a knife gash along his side. The talons sank momentarily, but deep, into the tender flesh of his underbody.

It was not a fight. It was a massacre. Laund had not time to collect his faculties or even to note clearly what manner of monster this was. All he knew was that a creature had swept down from the sky, preceded by a blotty black shadow, and was well-nigh murdering him.

In a second it was over. Even as Danny yelled to the bird and as he gathered his crutches under him to struggle to his feet, the giant hawk had lurched away from the screeching and rolling puppy, had snatched up the dead chick, and was beating its way skyward.

That was all. On the recently placid sunlit sward below, a frantically squawking hen ran to and fro amid five piping and scurrying chicks; and a brown collie wallowed about, waking the echoes with his terror yelps.

In all his six months of life Laund had known no cruelty, no pain, no ill-treatment. He had learned to herd sheep, as a pastime to himself. He had not dreamed there could be agony and danger in the fulfilling of any of his farm duties.

Now, while still he was scarcely more than a baby — while his milk teeth were still shedding — before his collie character could knit to courage and tense fortitude — he had been frightened out of his young wits and had been cruelly hurt and battered about; all by this mysterious and shadow-casting monster from the sky.

Through his howling he was peering upward in shuddering dread at the slowly receding giant hawk. Its blackness against the sun, its sinister sweep of pinion, its soaring motion, all stamped themselves indelibly on the puppy's shocked brain. More — the taste of its feathers was in his mouth. Its rank scent was strong in his nostrils. Dogs record impressions by odor even more than by sight. That hawk-reek was never to leave Laund's memory.

The pup's wails, and Danny's, brought the household thither on the run. Laund was soothed, and his hurts and bruises were tended, while Danny's own excitement was gently calmed. The doctors had said the little cripple must not be allowed to excite himself and that any strong emotion was bad for his twisted nerves.



In a few days Laund was well again, his flesh wounds healing with the incredible quickness that goes with the perfect physical condition of a young outdoor collie. Apparently he was none the worse for his experience. Ronald Crae understood dogs well, and he had watched keenly to see if the pup's gay spirit was cowed by his mis-handling from the hawk. As he could see no sign of this, he was genuinely relieved. A cowed dog makes a poor shepherd and a worse herder of cattle.

Crae did not tell Danny what he had feared. If he had, the child would have given him a less optimistic slant on the case. For more than once Danny saw Laund wince and cower when a low-flying pigeon chanced to winnow just above him on its flight from cote to barnyard.

It was a week later that Laund was driving a bunch of skittish and silly wethers across the road from the home fold to the first sheep pasture. Outwardly it was a simple job. All that need be done was to get them safely through the fold gate and out into the yard, thence through the yard gate out into the road, thence across the road and in through the home-pasture gate which Ronald Crae was holding open.

It was one of the easiest of Laund's duties. True, there was always an off-chance of the wethers trying to scatter or of one of them bolting down the road instead of into the pasture.

But the young dog had an instinct for this sort of thing. Like the best of his ancestors, he seemed to read the sheep's minds — if indeed sheep are blest or cursed with

minds — and to know beforehand in just what direction one or more of them were likely to break formation. Always he was on the spot, ready to turn back the galloping stray and to keep the rest from following the seceder.

Today he marshaled the milling bunch as snappily and cleanly as ever, herding them across the yard and to the road. On these wethers he wasted none of the gentleness he lavished on heavy ewes or on lambs. This, too, was an ancestral throwback, shared by a thousand other sheep-driving collies.

Into the road debouched the baaing and jostling flock. As ever, they were agog for any chance to get into mischief. Indeed, they were more than usually ready for it. For their ears were assailed by an unwonted sound — a far-off whirring that made them nervous.

Laund heard the sound, too, and was mildly interested in it, though it conveyed no meaning to him. Steadily he sent his wethers out into the road in a gray-white pattering cloud. Through the yard gate he dashed after them, on the heels of the hindmost, keyed up to the snappy task of making them cross the road without the compact bunch disintegrating, and on through the pasture gateway where Crae stood.

As his forefeet touched the edge of the road, a giant black shadow swept the yellow dust in front of him. The whirring waxed louder. Frightened, gripped by an unnamable terror, Laund glanced upward.

Above his head, sharply outlined against the pale blue

of the sky, was a hawk a hundred times larger than the one that had assaulted him. Very near it seemed — very near and indescribably terrible.

A state forest ranger, scouting for signs of mountain fires, glanced down from his airplane at the pastoral scene below him — the pretty farmstead, the flock of sheep crossing the road, the alert brown collie dog marshaling them. Then the aeronaut was treated to another and more interesting sight.

Even as he looked, the faithful dog ceased from his task of sheep-driving. Ki-yi-ing in piercing loudness and with furry tail clamped between his hind legs and with stomach to earth, the dog deserted his post of duty and fled madly toward the refuge of the open kitchen door.

Infected by his screaming terror, the sheep scattered up and down the road, scampering at top speed in both directions and dashing anywhere except in through the gateway where Ronald Crae danced up and down in profane fury.

The plane whirled on into the distance, its amused pilot ignorant that he was the cause of the spectacular panic or that a fool puppy had mistaken his machine for a punitive hen hawk.

After a long and angry search, Laund was found far under Danny's bed, huddled with his nose in a dusty corner and trembling all over.

"That settles it!" stormed Crae. "He's worthless. He's a cur — a mutt. He's yellow to the core. If it wasn't

that Danny loves him so I'd waste an ounce of buckshot on him, here and now. It's the only way to treat a collie that is such an arrant coward. He — "

"But, dear," protested his wife, while Danny sobbed in mingled grief over his collie chum's disgrace and in shame that Laund should have proved so pusillanimous, "you said yourself that he is the best sheep dog for his age you've ever trained. Just because he ran away the first time he saw an airship, it's no sign he won't be valuable to you in farm work. He — "

"'No sign,' hey?" he growled. "Suppose he is working a bunch of sheep near a precipice or over a bridge that hasn't a solid side rail — suppose an airship happens to sail over him, or a hawk? There's plenty of both hereabouts, these days. What is due to happen? Or if he is on herd duty in the upper pasture and a hawk or an airship sends him scuttling to cover, a mile away, what's to prevent anyone from stealing a sheep or two? Or what's to prevent stray dogs from raiding them? Besides, a dog that is a coward is no dog to have around us. He's yellow. He's worthless. If it wasn't for Danny — "

He saw his son trying to fight back the tears and slipping a wasted little arm around the cowering Laund. With a grunt, Ronald broke off in his tirade and stamped away.

More than a month passed before he would so much as look at the wistfully friendly puppy again or let him handle the sheep.

With all a collie's high sensitiveness, Laund realized he was in disgrace. He knew it had something to do with

his panic flight from the airship. To the depths of him he was ashamed. But to save his life he could not conquer that awful terror for soaring birds. It had become a part of him.

Wherefore, he turned unhappily to Danny for comfort, even though his instinct told him the boy no longer felt for him the admiring chumship of old days. Laund, Danny, Ronald — all, according to their natures — were wretched, in their own ways, because of the collie's shameful behavior.

Yet, even black disgrace wears its own sharpest edge dull, in time. Laund was the only dog left on the farm. He was imperatively needful for the herding. He was Danny's only chum, and a chum was imperatively needful to Danny. Thus, bit by bit, Laund slipped back into his former dual position of herder and pal, even though Ronald had lost all faith in his courage in emergency.

A bit of this faith was revived when Laund was about fourteen months old. He was driving a score of ewes and spindly-legged baby lambs home to the fold from the lush South Mowing. There was a world of difference in his method of handling them from his whirlwind tactics with a bunch of wethers.

Slowly and with infinite pains he eased them along the short stretch of road between the pasture and the farmstead, keeping the frisky lambs from galloping from their fellows by interposing his shaggy body between them and their way to escape, and softly edging them back to their mothers. The ewes he kept in formation by pushing his

head gently against their flanks as they sought to stray or to lag.

Even Ronald Crae gave grudging approval to strong young Laund coaxing his willful charges to their destination. Try as he would, the man could find nothing to criticize in the collie's work.

"There's not a dog that can hold a candle to him in any line of shepherding," muttered Crae to himself as he plodded far behind the woolly band. "If he hadn't the heart of a rabbit there'd be every chance for him to clean up the Grand Prize at the National Collie Association field trials, next month. But I was a fool to enter him for them, I suppose. A dog that'll turn tail and run to hide under a bed when he sees an airship or a hawk will never have the nerve to go through those stiff tests. He —"

Crae stopped short in his maundering thoughts. Laund had just slipped to the rear of the flock to cajole a tired ewe into rejoining the others. At the same moment a scatter-wit lambkin in the front rank gamboled far forward from the bunch.

A huge and hairy stray mongrel lurched out of a clump of wayside undergrowth and seized the stray lamb. Crae saw, and with a shout he ran forward.

But he was far to the rear. The narrow byroad was choked full of ewes and lambs, through which he must work his slow way before he could get to the impending slaughter.

Laund seemed to have heard or scented the mongrel before the latter was fairly free from the bushes. For he

shot through the huddle of sheep like a flung spear, seeming to swerve not an inch to right or to left, yet forbearing to jostle one of the dams or their babies.

By the time the mongrel's teeth sought their hold on the panicky lamb, something flashed out of the ruck of the flock and whizzed at him with express train speed.

Before the mongrel's ravening jaws could close on the woolly throat, young Laund's body had smitten the marauder full in the shoulder, rolling him over in the dust.

For a moment the two battling dogs rolled and revolved and spun on the ground, in a mad tangle that set the yellow dust to flying and scared the sheep into a baaing clump in mid-road.

Then the two warriors were on their feet again, rearing, tearing, rending at each other's throats, their snarling voices filling the still afternoon air with horrific din.

The mongrel was almost a third larger than the slender young collie. By sheer weight he bore Laund to earth, snatching avidly at the collie's throat.

But a collie down is not a collie beaten. Catlike, Laund tucked all four feet under him as he fell. Dodging the throat lunge he leaped up with the resilience of a rubber ball. As he arose, his curved eyetooth scored a razor gash in the mongrel's underbody and side.

Roaring with rage and pain, the mongrel reared to fling himself on his smaller opponent and to bear him down again by sheer weight. But seldom is a fighting collie caught twice in the same trap.

Downward the mongrel hurled himself. But his ad-

versary was no longer there. Diving under and beyond the larger dog, Laund slashed a second time, cutting to the very bone. Again he and his foe were face to face, foot to foot, tearing and slashing; the collie's speed enabling him to flash in and out and administer thrice as much punishment as he received.

The mongrel gained a grip on the side of Laund's throat. Laund wrenched free, leaving skin and hair in the other's jaws, and dived under again. This time he caught a grip dear to his wolf ancestors. His gleaming teeth seized the side of the mongrel's lower left hind leg.

With a screech the giant dog crashed to the road, hamstringed, helpless. There he lay until Crae's hired man came running up, rifle in hand, and put the brute out of his pain with a bullet through the skull.

For a mere second, Laund stood panting above his fallen enemy. Then seeing the mongrel had no more potentialities for harming the flock, the collie darted among the fast-scattering ewes and lambs, rounding them up and soothing them.

In his brief battle he had fought like a maddened wild beast. Yet now he was once more the lovingly gentle and wise shepherd, easing and quieting the scared flock as a mother might calm her frightened child.

"Laund!" cried Ronald Crae, delightedly, catching the collie's bleeding head between his callused hands in a gesture of rough affection. "I was dead wrong. You're as game a dog as ever breathed. It's up to me to apologize



for calling you a coward. That cur was as big and husky as a yearling. But you never flinched for a second. You sailed in and licked him. You're *true game*, Laund!"

The panting and bleeding collie wagged his plumed tail ecstatically at the praise and the rare caress. He wiggled and whimpered with joy. Then, of a sudden, he cowered to earth, peering skyward.

Far above flew the forest ranger's airplane, on the way back from a day's fire-scouting among the hills. With the shrill ki-yi of a kicked puppy, Laund clapped his tail between his legs and bolted for the house. Nor could Crae's fiercest shouts check his flight. He did not halt until he had plunged far under Danny's bed and tucked his nose into the dim corner of the little bedroom.

"Half of that dog ought to have a hero medal!" raged Crae, to his wife, as he stamped into the kitchen after he and the hired man had collected the scattered sheep and folded them. "Half of him ought to have a hero medal. And the other half of him ought to be shot for the rottenest coward I ever set eyes on. His pluck saved me a lamb, this afternoon. But his cowardice knocks out any chance of winning the field trials next month."

"But why? If—"

"The trials are held at the fair grounds—the second day of the Fair. There's dead sure to be a dozen airships buzzing around the field all day. There always are. The first one of them Laund sees, he'll drop his work, and he'll streak for home, yowling at every jump. I'm due to

be laughed out of my boots by the crowd, if I take him there. Yet there isn't another dog in the state that can touch him as a sheep-worker. Rank bad luck, isn't it? "

So it was that Laund's return to favor and to respect was pitifully brief. True, his victory prevented the Craes from continuing to regard him as an out-and-out coward. But the repetition of his flight from the airship all but blotted out the prestige of his fighting prowess.

The sensitive young dog felt the atmosphere of qualified disapproval which surrounded him, and he moped sadly. He knew he had done valiantly in tackling the formidable sheep-killer that had menaced his woolly charges. But he knew, too, that he was in disgrace again for yielding to that unconquerable fear which possessed him at sight of anything soaring in the air above his head.

He lay moping on the shady back porch of the farmhouse one hot morning, some days later. He was unhappy, and the heat made him drowsy. But with one half-shut eye he watched Danny limping painfully to the bantam yard and opening its gate to let his feathered pets out for a run in the grass.

Laund loved Danny as he loved nothing and nobody else. He was the crippled child's worshiping slave, giving to the boy the strangely protective adoration which the best type of collie reserves for the helpless. As a rule he was Danny's devoted shadow at every step the fragile little fellow took. But at breakfast this morning Crae had delivered another tirade on Laund's cowardice, having seen the collie flinch and tremble when a pigeon flew

above him in the barnyard. Danny had seen the same thing himself, more than once. But now that his father had seen and condemned it, the child felt a momentary disgust for the cringing dog. Wherefore, when the little fellow had come limping out on the porch between his awkward crutches and Laund had sprung up to follow him, Danny had bidden him crossly to stay where he was. With a sigh the dog had stretched himself out on the porch again, watching the child's slow progress across the yard to the bantam pen.

Danny swung wide the pen door. Out trooped the bantams, willingly following him as he led them to the grassplot. Supporting his weight on one of the two crutches — without which he could neither walk nor stand — he took a handful of crumbs from his pocket and tossed them into the grass for his pets to scramble for.

Laund was not the scene's only watcher. High in the hot blue sky hung two circling specks. From the earth they were almost invisible. But to their keen sight Danny and his scuttling chickens were as visible as they were to Laund himself.

The huge hen hawk and his mate were gaunt from long-continued foraging for their nestlings. Now that the brood was fledged and able to fend for itself, they had time to remember their own unappeased hunger.

For weeks they had eaten barely enough to keep themselves alive. All the rest of their plunder had been carried to a mammoth nest of brown sticks and twigs, high in the top of a mountainside pine tree, there to be fought

over and gobbled by two half-naked, wholly rapacious baby hawks.

Today the two mates were free at last to forage for themselves. But food was scarce. The wild things of woods and meadows had grown wary through the weeks of predatory hunt for them. Most farmers were keeping their chickens in wire-topped yards. The half-famished pair of hawks had scoured the heavens since dawn in quest of a meal, at every hour growing more ragingly famished.

Now, far below them, they saw the bevy of fat bantams at play in the grass, a full hundred yards from the nearest house. True, a crippled and twisted child stood near them, supported by crutches. But by some odd instinct the half-starved birds seemed to know he was not formidable or in any way to be feared.

No other human was in sight. Here, unprotected, was a feast of fat fowls. Thrice the hawks circled. Then, by tacit consent, they "stooped." Down through the windless air they clove their way at a speed of something like ninety miles an hour.

One of the bantams lifted its head and gave forth a warning "chir-r-r!" to its fellows. Instantly the brood scattered, with flapping wings and fast-twinkling yellow legs.

Danny stared in amazement. Then something blackish and huge swept down upon the nearest hen and gripped it. In the same fraction of time the second hawk smote the swaggering little rooster of the flock.

The rooster had turned and bolted to Danny for protection. Almost between the child's helpless feet he crouched. Here it was that the hawk struck him.

Immediately, Danny understood. His beloved flock was raided by hawks. In fury, he swung aloft one of his crutches; and he brought it down with all his puny strength in the direction of the big hawk as it started aloft with the squawking rooster in its talons.

Now, even in a weak grasp, a clubbed and swung crutch is a dangerous weapon. More than one strong man — as police records will show — has been killed by a well-struck blow on the head from such a bludgeon.

Danny smote not only with all his fragile force, but with the added strength of anger. He gripped the crutch by its rubber point and swung it with all his weight as well as with his weak muscular power. The blow was aimed in the general direction of the hawk, as the bird left ground. The hawk's upward spring added to the crutch's momentum. The sharp corner of the armpit crosspiece happened to come in swashing contact with the bird's skull.

The impact of the stroke knocked the crutch out of Danny's hand and upset the child's own equilibrium. To the grass he sprawled, the other crutch falling far out of his reach. There he lay, struggling vainly to rise. One clutching little hand closed on the pinions of the hawk.

The bird had been smitten senseless by the whack of the crutch point against the skull. Though the force had

not been great enough to smash the skull or break the neck, yet it had knocked the hawk unconscious for a moment or so. The giant brown bird lay supine, with outstretched wings. Right valorously did the prostrate child seize upon the nearest of these wings.

As he had seen the first hawk strike, Danny had cried aloud in startled defiance at the preying bird. The cry had not reached his mother, working indoors, or the men who were unloading a wagon of hay into the loft on the far side of the barn. But it had assailed the ears of Laund, even as the collie was shrinking back into the kitchen at the far sound of those dreaded rushing wings.

For the barest fraction of an instant Laund crouched, hesitant. Then again came Danny's involuntary cry and the soft thud of his falling body on the grass. Laund hesitated no longer.

The second hawk was mounting in air, carrying its prey toward the safety of the mountain forest, there to be devoured at leisure. But, looking down, it saw its mate stretched senseless on the ground, the crippled child grasping its wing.

Through the courage of devotion or through contempt for so puny an adversary, the hawk dropped its luscious burden and flew at the struggling Danny.

Again Laund hesitated, though this time only in spirit, for his lithe mighty body was in hurricane motion as he sped to Danny's aid. His heart flinched at sight and sound of those swishing great wings, at the rank scent, and at the ferocious menace of beak and claw. Almost

ungovernable was his terror at the stark nearness of these flying scourges, the only things in all the world that he feared to the point of insane panic.

Tremendous was the urge of that mortal terror. But tenfold more urgent upon him was the peril to Danny, whom he worshiped.

The child lay, still grasping the wing of the hawk he had so luckily stunned. With his other hand he was preparing to strike the hawk's onrushing mate. The infuriated bird was hurling itself full at Danny's defenseless face, heedless of the ridiculously useless barrier of his outthrust fist. The stunned hawk began to quiver and twist, as consciousness seeped back into its jarred brain.

This was what Laund saw. This was what Laund understood. And the understanding of his little master's hideous danger slew the fear that hitherto had been his most unconquerable impulse.

Straight at the cripple's face flew the hawk. The curved beak and the rending talons were not six inches from Danny's eyes when something big and furry tore past, vaulting the prostrate child and the stunned bird beside him.

With all the speed and skill of his wolf ancestors Laund drove his curved white tusks into the breast of the charging hawk.

Deep clove his eyeteeth through the armor of feathers and through the tough breastbone. They ground their way with silent intensity toward a meeting in the very vitals of the hawk.

The bird bombarded him with its powerful wings, banging him deafeningly and agonizingly about the head and shoulders, hammering his sensitive ears. The curved talons tore at his white chest, ripping deep and viciously. The crooked beak struck for his eyes, again and again, in lightning strokes. Failing to reach them, it slashed the silken top of his head, well-nigh severing one of his furry little tulip ears.

Laund was oblivious to the fivefold punishment, the very hint of which had hitherto been enough to send him ki-yi-ing under Danny's bed. He was not fighting now for himself, but for the child who was at once his ward and his deity.

On himself he was taking the torture that otherwise must have been inflicted on Danny. For perhaps the millionth time in the history of mankind and of dog, the Scriptural adage was fulfilled, and perfect love was casting out fear.

Then, of a sudden, the punishment ceased. The hawk quivered all over and collapsed inert between Laund's jaws. One of the mightily grinding eyeteeth had pierced its heart.

Laund dropped the carrion carcass, backing away and blinking, as his head buzzed with the bastinado of wing blows it had sustained and with the pain of the beak stabs.

But there was no time to get his breath and his bearings. The second hawk had come back to consciousness



with a startling and raging suddenness. Finding its wing grasped by a human hand, it was turning fiercely upon the child.

Laund flung himself on the hawk from behind. He attacked just soon enough to deflect the beak from its aim at the boy's eyes and the talons from the boy's puny throat.

His snapping jaws aimed for the hawk's neck, to break it. They missed their mark by less than an inch, tearing out a thick tuft of feathers instead. His white forefeet were planted on the hawk's tail as he struck for the neck.

The bird's charge at Danny was balked, but the hawk itself was not injured. It whirled about on the dog, pecking for the eyes and lambasting his hurt head with its fistlike pinions.

Heedless of the menace, Laund drove in at the furious creature, striking again for the breast. For a few seconds, the pair were one scrambling, flapping, snarling, and tumbling mass.

Away from Danny they rolled and staggered in their mad scrimmage. Then Laund ceased to thrash about. He braced himself and stood still. He had found the breast hold he sought.

For another few moments the climax of the earlier battle was re-enacted. To Danny it seemed as if the bird were beating and ripping his dear pal to death.

Beside himself with wild desire to rescue Laund and ashamed of his own contempt for the dog's supposed

cowardice, Danny writhed to his feet and staggered toward the battling pair, his fists aloft in gallant effort to tear the hawk in two.

Then, as before, came that sudden cessation of wing-beating. The bird quivered spasmodically. Laund let the dead hawk drop from his jaws as he had let drop its mate. Staggering drunkenly up to Danny, he tried to lick the child's tear-spattered face.

From the house and from the barn came the multiple thud of running feet. Mrs. Crae and the men were bearing down upon the scene. They saw a bleeding and reeling dog walking toward them beside a weeping and reeling little boy. From the onlookers went up a wordless and gabbling shout of astonishment.

Danny was walking! Without his crutches he was walking, he who had not taken a step by himself since the day he was stricken with the illness that crippled him, he whose parents had been told by the doctors that he could never hope to walk or even to stand up without his crutches!

Yes, he was one of the several hundred children — victims of the same disease and of other nerve-paralysis disorders — who regained the long-lost power over their limbs and muscles through great shock and supreme effort. But that made the miracle seem none the less a miracle to the Craes and to the former cripple himself.

In the midst of the annual field trials of the National Collie Association, the next month, a gigantic and noisy

airplane whirred low over the field where the dogs were at work.

If Laund heard or saw it, he gave it no heed. He went unerringly and calmly and snappily ahead with his tests — until he won the Grand Prize.

He saw no reason to feel scared or even interested when the airship cast its winged shadow across him. A few weeks earlier he had fought and conquered two of those same flappy things. He had proved to himself, forever, that there was nothing about them to be afraid of.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU

##### *What Do You Think?*

1. What double duty is Laund to learn?
2. What pets are Danny's chief joy after he is crippled?
3. Why does Laund's first encounter with the hawk prove so disastrous?
4. What does only Danny know about the effect upon Laund of the battle with the hawk?
5. What happens to bring disgrace upon Laund?
6. How does he win back partial respect from Danny's father?
7. What makes his return to favor short-lived?
8. Why is Mr. Crae doubtful about entering Laund in the National Collie Association field trials?
9. How does it happen that Danny is alone with his bantams when the hawks swoop down?
10. How does Danny show courage before Laund comes to his rescue?
11. Describe Laund's part in the rescue.

12. What is meant by "the Scriptural adage was fulfilled, and perfect love was casting out fear"?
13. What miracle happens? Do you know of similar cases in real life? (Similar cases are cited in the October, 1939, *Reader's Digest* condensation of an article from *Your Life*, entitled "Salvaging the Spastics.")
14. Why is Laund no longer afraid of airplanes or hawks?
15. Can you tell of cases where boys or girls have been able to overcome fear in somewhat the same way as Laund does in the story?
16. What comparisons can you make between this story and the other stories about dogs in this book?

#### *If You Want to Talk or Write*

1. A conversation between two men at the field trials after Laund has won the Grand Prize (Suppose that one of them has heard the story of Laund's training.)
2. Suppose that the doctor comes to see Danny the next day after the fight with the hawk. Tell or write the conversation that you imagine would take place.
3. Get from your library another story by Mr. Terhune called "Hero." Compare the dog in "Hero" with the dog in "The Coward."
4. If you have a pet that did some brave deed, tell your classmates the story of your pet.

#### *If You Want to Read*

*The Terhune Omnibus, The Critter and Other Dogs, Gray Dawn, The Way of a Dog, Albert Payson Terhune*  
*The Book of Sunnybrook, The Bar Sinister, Richard Harding Davis*  
*Collected Dog Stories, Rudyard Kipling*  
*The Call of the Wild and White Fang, Jack London*  
*"Smudgeface the Pup," Philip Curtis*

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